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THE EXPOSITOR'S BIBLE

EDITED BY THE REV.

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Editor of "The Expositor"

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THE

BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

BY THE REV.

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Dedicated to

REV. A. B. DAVIDSON, D.D., LL.D.

NEW COLLEGE, EDINBURGH

IN VERY GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE

OF

INSTRUCTION AND IMPULSE

IN OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

PREFACE.

AN adequate exposition of Deuteronomy requires the discussion of many topics. The author has endeavoured to keep these various claims in view: at the same time the limits of the volume have dictated selection and compression. In particular, a chapter on miracle in the Old Testament has been wholly omitted. That topic cannot be said to have a peculiar or exclusive relation to Deuteronomy. Yet the writer would have wished to include in the volume a reasoned statement of the grounds on which he owns and asserts the supernatural in Old Testament history; all the more because he admits critical views which have sometimes been associated, and still oftener supposed to be associated, with rationalistic views generally. For the present this discussion is postponed. In some instances, also, the writer has been obliged to content himself with statements on critical questions more brief than he could have desired; but it is hoped that enough has been said to explain the position assumed, and to make clear the main lines of argument.

The task of adjusting the matter to the space would have been easier if it had seemed legitimate to omit the critical and archæological questions on the one hand, or,

on the other, to leave untouched the bearing of the thoughts and Laws of Deuteronomy on the religious history of the race, and on the dangers and duties of our own age. But an exposition of Deuteronomy must endeavour to open the appropriate outlooks in all these directions.

Owing to the author's distance from London the work of passing the book through the press has necessarily been left wholly to others. It is hoped that oversights which may have arisen from this cause will be pardoned.

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CHAPTER I

THE AUTHORSHIP AND AGE OF DEUTERONOMY

IN approaching a book so spiritually great as Deuteronomy, it might seem superfluous to allude to the critical questions which have been raised concerning it. On any supposition as to origin and authorship, its spiritual elevation and the moral impulse it gives are always there; and it might consequently seem sufficient to expound and illustrate the text as we have it. Minute and vexatious inquiry into details, such as any adequate treatment of the critical question demands, tends to draw away the mind, in a disastrous way, from the spiritual and moral purpose of the book. That however is precisely what the expositor has to elucidate and apply; and so it might seem to be an error in method to enter upon extraneous matters such as those with which criticism has mainly to do.

On the other hand, this has to be taken into account. The truth about the composition of a book, about the authorities it is founded on, about the times in which and the circumstances under which it was composed, if it be attainable, often throws a very welcome light upon the meaning. It clears up obscurities, removes chances of error, and often, when two or three possible paths have opened before us, it shuts us up to the right one. But if that is the case when no special conflict of opinion has arisen, it is much more so when a revolution of opinion concerning the whole religious life of a nation has been

caused by the critical view of a book adopted by able men. Now that is plainly the case here. Deuteronomy has been the key of the position, the centre of the conflict, in the battle which has been waged so hotly as to the growth of religion in Israel. The attack upon the views hitherto generally held within the Church in regard to that matter has rested more upon the character and date of Deuteronomy than upon anything else. Consequently every part of the book has been the object of intense and microscopic scrutiny, and there is scarcely a cardinal point in it which must not be regarded differently, according as we accept or reject the strictly Mosaic origin of the book as a whole, or even of the legal portions. The difference is probably never absolutely fundamental. On either supposition, as we have said, the spiritual and moral teaching remains the same; but the mind is apt to be clouded with harassing doubt as to many important points, until clear views on the critical question have been attained. This is felt more or less acutely by all readers of the Old Testament who are touched by recent debates, and they expect that any new exposition shall help them to a clearer view. Many will even demand that some effort in that direction should be made; and, as we think, they rightly demand it.

But there is still another reason for dealing with the questions gathering round the authorship and age of our book, and it is decisive. The debate concerning the critical views of the Old Testament has reached a stage at which it is no longer confined to the professed teachers and students of the Old Testament. It has filtered down, through magazines first, and then through newspapers, into the public mind, and opinions are becoming current concerning the results of criticism which are so partial and ill-informed that they cannot but produce evil results of a formidable kind in the near future. By those who are sceptically inclined, as well as by those who cling

most closely to the teaching of the Churches, it is loudly proclaimed that the acceptance of the critical view—viz. that the Levitical law, as a written code, came into existence after the Exile, and that Deuteronomy, written in the royal period of Israelite history, occupies a middle position between the first legislation (Exod. xx.—xxiii.) and this latest—destroys the character of the Old Testament as a record of Revelation, and undermines Christianity itself. The former class rejoice that this should be so, and think their scepticism is thereby justified. The latter, on the contrary, reject the critical conclusions with vehemence. They have found God through the Scripture, and, resting upon this experience, they turn away from theories which they believe to be in direct conflict with it. To write an exposition of Deuteronomy therefore, without correcting the false impression that the critical view as to its age, etc., is incompatible with faith in a Divine revelation, would be to miss one of the great opportunities which fall to writers on the Old Testament in our day. Questions regarding the age, authorship, and literary form of the books of Scripture cannot ultimately be so decided as to nullify the testimony borne to them by the experience of so many generations of Christian men and women. Whatever makes itself ultimately credible to the human mind in regard to such matters, will always be capable of being held along with a belief in the manifestation of Himself which God has given in the history and literature of Israel. But nothing will make that fact so readily apprehensible, nothing will make it stand out so clearly, as an exposition of a book like Deuteronomy, which takes account of all that seems established in the critical view. Even the most extreme critical positions, when separated from the totally irrelevant assumption (which too often accompanies them) that miracle is unhistorical, are compatible with a real faith in Revelation and Inspiration. It

is not the fact of Revelation, but the common conception of its method, which is challenged by the critical theories. We shall therefore only try to meet a clamant need of our time, if we take with us into the explanation of the Deuteronomic teaching a definite conclusion as to the authorship, age, and literary character of the book.

As regards authorship, the ordinary opinion still is that Deuteronomy was written by Moses. This was the view handed over to Christianity in pre-critical ages by the Jews, and accepted as the natural one. But if the Mosaic authorship of the whole contents of the other books of the Pentateuch is now given up, much more should it be given up in the case of Deuteronomy. For Deuteronomy does not even claim to be written by Moses. It is not merely that in it Moses is often spoken of in the third person; that, if it were carried out consistently, as it is, for instance, in Cæsar's Commentaries, would be compatible with Mosaic authorship. But what we find is that the author, "whenever he speaks himself, purports to give a description in the third person of what Moses did or said,"[1] while Moses, when he speaks, always uses the first person. The book, consequently, falls naturally into two portions: the subsidiary, introductory framework of statement, in which Moses is always spoken of in the third person, together with the historical portions; and the utterances of Moses himself, which these introduce and hold together, and in which Moses always uses the first person.[2] Again, wherever the expression "beyond Jordan" is used in the portions where the author speaks for himself, it signifies the land of Moab.[3] Wherever, on the contrary, Moses is introduced speaking in the first person,

[1] Driver, *Introduction*, 5th Ed., p. 84.

[2] Cf. Deut. i. 1-5, iv. 41-43, iv. 44, v. 1, xxvii. 1, 9-11, **xxix. 1, xxxi.** 1-30.

[3] Cf. Deut. i. 1, 5, iv. 41, 46, 47, 49.

"beyond Jordan" denotes the land of Israel.[1] The only exception is iii. 8, where at the beginning of a long archæological note, which cannot have originally formed part of the speech of Moses, and consequently must be a comment of the writer, or of a later editor of Deuteronomy, "beyond Jordan" signifies the land of Moab. If, consequently, the book be taken at its word, there can be no doubt that it professes to be an account of what Moses did and said on a certain day in the land of Moab, before his death, written by another person, who lived to the west of the Jordan. The author must consequently have lived after Moses' day; and he has taken pains by his use of language to distinguish himself from Moses in a most unmistakable way. It is no doubt possible, though not probable, that Moses might have written of himself in the third person in the connecting passages, and in the first person in the remainder of his book: but that he should have made the anxious distinction we have seen as to the phrase "beyond Jordan" does not seem possible.

But if our book, as we have it, is not by Moses, but is an account by another person of what Moses did and said on a certain occasion, that fact has a very important bearing upon the speeches reported as Mosaic. For the style of the whole book up to the end of the twenty-eighth chapter is, for all practical purposes, one. The parts where the author speaks, and the parts where Moses speaks, are all alike in style, and that style is in all respects different from the style of the speeches attributed to Moses in other parts of the Pentateuch. Consequently we cannot accept the speeches and laws as being in the very words of Moses. They may contain the exact ideas of Moses, but these have manifestly passed through the mind and clothed themselves in the vocabulary of the author of

[1] iii. 20, 25, and xi. 30.

Deuteronomy. Even Delitzsch is quite decisive on this point.[1] In the tenth of his *Pentateuch Kritische Studien*, after distinguishing the Deuteronomist from Moses, he continues thus: "The addresses are freely reproduced, and he who reproduces them is the same who also contributed the historical framework and the historical details between the addresses. The same colouring, though in a less degree, may also be remarked in the repetition of the law in chapters xii.—xxvi. to which the book owes its name. All the component parts of Deuteronomy, not excepting the legal prescriptions, are woven through and through with the favourite phrases of the Deuteronomist."

Under these circumstances, the question immediately suggests itself to what degree this representation of Moses' legislation can be regarded as purely and unmixedly Mosaic. Was this legislation given in the main or entirely by Moses, and, if it was so given, may there not be mingled with what he gave inferences drawn by the author in whose style the book is written, and adaptations demanded by the exigencies of his later times? A full discussion of this point would, of course, be out of the question here, and it would, moreover, be superfluous. In Dr. Driver's article on "Deuteronomy" in Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, and in his *Introduction to Hebrew Literature*, detailed discussions will be found. All that is necessary here is that one or two large and salient aspects of the question should be looked at.

In the first place, it is important to know whether the author of Deuteronomy can have been a contemporary of Moses, or a younger contemporary of his contemporaries. If he were, the relation between the speeches and legislation in his book and that which Moses actually uttered would be similar to that between the speeches of Christ

[1] Cf. *Pentateuch Kritische Studien* in Luthardt's *Zeitschrift*, 1880.

reported by St. John in his Gospel and the actual words of our Lord. They might, in fact, be taken to be in all respects a reliable, though not a verbal, representation of what Moses actually said or commanded. If, on the contrary, it should be proved, either from the character of the legislation itself, or from the evidence we have as to the date of the authorities whom the Deuteronomist quotes, and upon whom he relies, that he must have lived centuries later, then any such confidence would be materially weakened. Now there can be no doubt, to take the last point first, that Deuteronomy, taken as a legal code, though not wanting in laws which have been first formulated by its author, is mainly intended to be a repetition and a reinforcement of what we find in the Book of the Covenant (Exod. xx.—xxiii.). The result of Driver's careful tabulation of the subjects dealt with in the two codes is "that the laws in JE,[1] viz. Exod. xx.—xxiii. (repeated partially in xxxiv. 10-26) and the kindred section xiii. 3-16, *form the foundations of the Deuteronomic legislation.* This is evident as well from the numerous verbal coincidences as from the fact that nearly the whole ground covered by Exod. xx.—xxiii. is included in it; almost the only exception being the special compensations to be paid for various injuries (Exod. xxi. 18, xxii. 15), which would be less necessary in a manual intended for the people." This is also the conclusion of other scholars,

[1] It is scarcely necessary to remind readers that, from the point of view of the critics, J signifies one of the constituent documents of the Pentateuch which uses the name Yahweh for God. Its date is about 850 B.C. E is that document which uses the name Elohim, and may be dated about the same period as J. D is the author of Deuteronomy, who wrote, it is supposed, in the reign of Manasseh, perhaps about 670 B.C. P is the Priestly document, which Dillmann dates before Deuteronomy, but which most critics think was brought substantially into its present shape by Ezra. The portions of the Pentateuch assigned to these various documents will be found in Driver's *Introduction.*

and indeed is plainly demanded by the facts. It is, moreover, what may be called the Biblical hypothesis, for Moses is supposed to have been renewing the covenant made at Horeb, and repeating its conditions.

But in the present condition of our knowledge, the fact of Deuteronomy's dependence upon the Book of the Covenant brings into view unexpected consequences. It is true, certainly, that the laws of the latter code existed before they were incorporated in the text where we now find them. Consequently no verbal coincidences would give us the assurance that the Deuteronomist had before him the actual book in which these laws have come down to us. But a conclusion may be reached in another way. A comparison of the historical portions of Deuteronomy with the corresponding narrative in the previous four books of our Bible shows that for his history also the author of Deuteronomy relies upon these earlier narratives, and that he must have had portions at least of them before him in the same text as we have now. The verbal coincidences tabulated in Driver, pp. 75 f., as well as the general and exact agreement in the events recorded in Deuteronomy with those recorded in the earlier books, show that the author has not only drawn his information from the same sources as those of the earlier books, but that he must have had before him at least that section which contains the laws.

Now, as it happens, in the course of the analysis of the Pentateuch it has come to be all but universally acknowledged that Exod. xx.—xxiii. form part of a document which can be traced, dovetailed into others, from Genesis to Joshua, and perhaps beyond it. This document has been called by Wellhausen the Jehovist document, and in all critical books it is referred to as JE, as being made up of two sections, one of which uses Yahweh for the Divine name, and the other Elohim. The only generally known

scholar who denies the existence of JE is Professor Green, of Princeton in America, who, rightly enough, sees that the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch cannot be held, if these separate component documents are acknowledged. But the separate existence and character of JE may be regarded as demonstrated, and also that it has been interwoven with another narrative, largely parallel, but which deals of preference with priestly matters, and has consequently been called the Priest codex, or P. Together these make up the first four books of the Pentateuch; and the remarkable thing is that, both as regards law and history, Deuteronomy is dependent upon JE. "Throughout the parallels just tabulated," says Driver,[1] "(as well as in the others occurring in the book), not the allusions only, but the words cited, will be found, all but uniformly, to be in JE, not in P. An important conclusion follows from this fact. Inasmuch as, in our existing Pentateuch, JE and P repeatedly cross one another, the constant absence of any reference to P can only be reasonably explained by one supposition, viz. that when Deuteronomy was composed JE and P were not yet united into a single work, and JE alone formed the basis of Deuteronomy." And this is not Driver's conclusion only. Dillmann, who argues with splendid ability against Wellhausen for the dating of P in the ninth century B.C. instead of after the Exile, and consequently considers that it was in existence before Deuteronomy, still holds that in general JE is the Deuteronomist's authority both for law and history, contenting himself with affirming that D shows undoubted acquaintance with laws, etc., known *to us* only in P. Clearly, therefore, Deuteronomy must have been written after JE had been made public, or at least after J and E had been written.

[1] Driver, *Introduction*, p. 76.

The question therefore arises, what is their date? An answer can be gradually approached in this way. As JE reappear as an element in the Book of Joshua,[1] and contribute to it an account of Joshua's death and burial, they cannot have been written by him, nor before his death. That is the first fixed point. Then we may proceed a step further. In various parts of JE there occur phrases which cannot all be later glosses, and which imply that the land, when the writer lived, had long ceased to be in possession of the Canaanites, if some of them do not even presuppose a time when the original inhabitants had been absorbed into Israel, as Solomon attempted to absorb them by making them slaves of the State. Such passages are Gen. xii. 6, "And the Canaanite was then in the land"; Gen. xiii. 7, "Moreover the Canaanites and the Perizzites dwelled then in the land"; Gen. xl. 15, in which Joseph says of himself, "I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews," a name which the country could not have acquired till some little time at least after the conquest. Further, in Numbers xxxii. 41, which belongs to J or E, probably the latter, we have an account of the rise of the name Hawwoth Jair. Now in Judges x. 3-5 we are informed that the Jair from whom the Hawwoth Jair had their name was a judge in Israel after the time of Abimelech, who made new conquests for his tribe east of the Jordan. Unless, therefore, the unlikely hypothesis be accepted that both the district bearing this name in Judges and its conqueror are other than those mentioned in Numbers, the verse brings down JE at least to the period of Abimelech, which Kautzsch in his *View of the History of the Israelites*, appended to his translation of the Old Testament, states as about 1120 B.C., *i.e.* two hundred years after the Exodus.

[1] Josh. xxiv. 30.

The next step is suggested by Gen. xxxvi. 31-39, a passage from JE in which a list of Edomite kings is given with this heading: "These are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom before there reigned any king over the children of Israel." That sentence clearly cannot have been written before kings arose in Israel; consequently JE must be later than the days of Saul, and probably than David, since the Israelite kingship appears to the author's mind here as a firmly established institution. The author of Deuteronomy must have lived and written at a still later date, and we are thus gradually brought down to the time of Solomon, or perhaps even later.

And the literary indications of date confirm this conclusion. For instance, two books are quoted occasionally in JE as authorities, which must consequently have existed before that work—the Book of the Wars of Yahweh (Numb. xxi. 14, 15), and the Book of Yashar (Josh. x. 12 f.). The former has indeed been declared by Geiger to be the product of false punctuation; but soberer critics have accepted it and date it in Solomon's day. However that may be, there can be no doubt that the latter actually existed, and was probably a collection of songs, since from it the verses describing the standing still of the sun and moon are quoted. But we learn from 2 Sam. i. 18 that David's beautiful lament for Saul and Jonathan was contained in this book, and was quoted from it by the sacred historian. The book must therefore have been compiled, or at least completed, after David's lament. As it was manifestly a compilation, and the poems it contained may have been of very various ages, much stress in our search for dates cannot be laid upon it. It is still of some weight, however, that this post-Davidic book is quoted by JE; so far as it goes, that fact confirms the conclusion arrived at from other indications.

In the same way, the linguistic indications, though not

of themselves conclusive, point towards the same period. It is, of course, true that we are as yet far from having a general agreement as to the history of the Hebrew language. That can only be established along with the history of the Hebrew literature and the Hebrew people; and perhaps we never shall be able to fix any definite stages in the growth and decay of the language. Nevertheless no careful reader of JE will deny what Professor Driver says regarding them: "Both belong to the golden period of Hebrew literature. They resemble the best parts of Judges and Samuel (much of which cannot be greatly later than David's own time); but whether they are actually earlier or later than these, the language and style do not enable us to say. There is at least no *archaic* flavour perceptible in the style of JE."[1] That is an admirably balanced judgment, and we may rely upon the indication it gives as an additional confirmation of what we have already seen to be probable.

It is impossible that these various lines of inquiry should converge, as they have done, towards the early centuries of the kingship as the date of JE, if Moses had written Deuteronomy, in which JE is drawn upon at every moment. We may consequently dismiss that view finally, and admit that the author of Deuteronomy cannot well have written before the middle of the kingly period. But we have still to inquire what the character of the Mosaic speeches and the Mosaic writings given in Deuteronomy is in that case. Had the author lived and written near the time of Moses, we might, as has been said, have accepted them as the Church generally accepts the Johannine speeches of Christ. But if the Deuteronomist wrote four, or five, or six centuries after Moses, what are we to say? In one view it must be granted that his account may be as accurate as if it had been written within fifty years

[1] *Introduction*, p. 117.

of Moses' death. For an author of our own day, by keeping close to original written authorities, and strenuously endeavouring to keep out of his mind any information he may have as to later times, may reproduce with marvellous correctness the actual state of things, as regards law and other departments of public life, which existed in England, say, five hundred years ago. Similarly the author of Deuteronomy *may* have handed on to us, without flaw or defect, the information as to Moses' sayings and doings in the plains of Moab which he had received from the written accounts of Moses' contemporaries. He may have done so; but when we consider that his authorities may have been in part not much earlier than his own time, that the critical sifting of history was then unknown, and finally and most important of all, that the Deuteronomist has hortatory much more than purely historical aims, we cannot evade the question whether a good deal that is here set down to Moses may not turn out to be additions to and deductions from the original Mosaic germs of law, made by inspired law-givers and prophets who took up and carried on Moses' work. Many assert that this is so, and we must face and try to settle the question they raise.

The theory held by those who most strenuously deny this assertion is that all the laws in the Pentateuch are Mosaic in the strict sense, that the codes were given by Moses in the order in which they now stand in the Pentateuch, and that they were enacted with all their modifications in a period of not more than forty years, all of which was spent in the desert. In order to ascertain whether this view is tenable, we shall take one or two of the more important matters, such as the place of worship, the agents of worship, and the support of the cultus; and we shall compare the provisions of the various codes in order to see whether they can be supposed to belong to so short a period, or to have been all enacted by one man.

Let us take first the place of worship. The three codes —that called the Book of the Covenant (Exod. xx.—xxiii.), that contained in Leviticus and Numbers and called the Levitical code, and that in Deuteronomy—all contain directions about this. In the first the prescriptions are (Exod. xx. 24): "An altar of earth shalt thou make to Me, and thou shalt sacrifice upon it thy burnt offerings and thy peace offerings, thy sheep and thy oxen. In every place where I cause My name to be remembered I will come unto and bless thee." In the Levitical law "the altar" is to be of Shittim or acacia wood overlaid with copper, and the place for it is to be in the court of the Tabernacle. There all sacrifices are to be offered, and thither every slaughtered animal is to be brought (Lev. xvii. 1 ff.), and this is to be a statute for ever unto them throughout their generations. In Deuteronomy again (chap. xii.) it is enacted that all sacrifices are to be brought "unto the place which Yahweh your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put His name there," and ver. 21, "If the place which Yahweh thy God hath chosen to put His name there be too far from thee, then thou shalt kill of thy herd and of thy flock" and eat them as game was eaten without bringing it to the Sanctuary. But Moses is not represented as ordering this law to be introduced immediately. It is only when they go over Jordan and dwell in the land which Yahweh their God giveth them, and when He giveth them rest from all their enemies round about so that they dwell in safety, that they are to do this. Nay, according to ver. 20 the new order is to be fully introduced only when Yahweh their God shall enlarge their border as He had promised, *i.e.* when their boundaries should be (xi. 24) the wilderness on the south and Lebanon on the north, the Euphrates on the east and the Mediterranean on the west. Now these boundaries were attained only in David's day, and the

rest from all their enemies round about was, as Dillmann says, given as a matter of fact only in the times of David and Solomon (cf. 2 Sam. vii. 11 and 1 Kings v. 18), notwithstanding Josh. xxi. 42. Consequently the Temple at Jerusalem must have been the place referred to. This is distinctly the view of 1 Kings iii. 3 and viii. 16. The latter passage is peculiarly emphatic. Solomon says, at the dedication of the Temple, "Since the day that I brought forth My people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel to build an house that My name might be therein." The Deuteronomic view consequently is that the law requiring sacrifice at *one* sole altar was intended by Moses to be enforced only after the Temple at Jerusalem had been built.

These are the provisions of the three codes. Can they have been the successive ordinances of a man legislating under the influence of Divine inspiration within a period of less than forty years? Let us see. The first legislation was given at Sinai, in the third month after the Exodus: the Levitical legislation on the matter was given about nine months later when the Tabernacle was finished, and during that time they had not removed from Sinai: thirty-eight years afterwards the Deuteronomic code was given in the plains of Moab. Let us look at the character of the legislation given first of all at Sinai. The meaning of the decisive phrase, "In every place where I cause My name to be remembered I will come unto thee and bless thee," has been much discussed; yet taken as it stands, without reference to laws which on any supposition are later, it cannot mean that sacrifices were to be offered only at one central shrine. It specially provides for sacrifices being offered at different places, but restricts them to places which Yahweh Himself has chosen. At every such place He promises to come to them and bless them. So much, men of all schools admit; difference of

opinion arises only as to whether these places are meant to be successive, or whether they may be simultaneous. The view of those who accept all the legislation of the Pentateuch as Mosaic in the strict sense is that the places could only be successive, since otherwise the words would imply that originally worship at one altar was not prescribed. Delitzsch, for example, maintains that these words imply necessarily only this, that the place of sacrifice would, in the course of time, be altered by Divine appointment, and he declares that to be their meaning. Others, again, suppose that the command was meant only to justify worship at the various places where the Tabernacle was called to halt on the people's journeyings, whether in the wilderness or in Palestine. Now it cannot be denied that only on some such interpretation can Exodus be brought into harmony with Leviticus, and that undoubtedly has influenced, and rightly so, the scholars who take this view. If it were tenable it would be by far the most satisfactory interpretation. But it can hardly be considered tenable if we look at the time at which this law was given. There was as yet no other law, and this was given as soon as the people came to Mount Sinai. The law in Leviticus was not on any supposition given till nine months later. Now, if Exod. xx. 24 was meant for immediate use only, and was superseded by the Levitical law after so short a time, it is difficult to understand why it was given, and still more difficult to conceive why it was preserved. In any case it cannot have been understood to command worship at only one place. It could have no other sense than that the people, so long as they were at Sinai, were to sacrifice only at Sinai where Yahweh had revealed Himself, or at other places in the neighbourhood which He should sanctify, or had sanctified, by revealing His presence at them. At any such place, if there He had once revealed

Himself, He would continue to meet them. Without the colour thrown upon them by succeeding laws, that is surely the only meaning that *could* be put upon the words, and so understood they undoubtedly authorise sacrifice at two or more places simultaneously. If, on the other hand, this law was meant more for the future than the present, as some of the laws in the Book of the Covenant undoubtedly were, it must have been intended to be in force concurrently with Lev. i. f. But if so, the "places" it refers to cannot be the mere halting-places on the wilderness journey. No doubt these were determined by Yahweh, and the tabernacle was set up at places He may be said to have chosen, but the places themselves were of no consequence at all. The Divine presence is declared to be always in the Tabernacle. That was certainly a place where Yahweh caused His name to be remembered, and without further inquiry about place, the men of Israel knew that He would always meet them and bless them in sacrifice there. The different character of the altar in the Book of the Covenant too, a mere heap of earth or unhewn stone, and that in the Tabernacle, made of acacia wood overlaid with copper, corroborates the view that the altar aimed at in Exod. xxiv. is not the Tabernacle altar. The only coherent view, on the supposition of the concurrence of the two laws, is therefore that while, as a rule, sacrifice was to be offered at the Tabernacle, yet if the people came to any place where Yahweh had caused His name to be remembered, sacrifice might be offered there on an altar of earth or unhewn stone, as well as at the Tabernacle. Either way therefore there is permission to worship at more than one place. But then the difficulty is that Leviticus appears to denounce upon pain of being "cut off from the people" absolutely every sacrifice not offered at the Tabernacle.

Now if so far matters have been far from clear on the

traditional supposition of the date and order of these codes, a glance at Deuteronomy will produce absolute confusion in every mind. As we have seen, Deuteronomy represents Moses as restricting sacrifice most rigorously to one altar after the building of the Temple at Jerusalem, but virtually declaring that worship at various shrines was to be blameless until that time. We have also seen that that is the view taken by the author of the Book of Kings. Now this might be regarded as a temporary relaxation of the law, intended to meet the difficult circumstances of a period of war and conquest, were it not for one thing. That is, that Moses in Deut. xii. 8, after prescribing worship at one altar, adds, "Ye shall not do after all that *we* do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes," and as if to render mistake as to the meaning impossible, in ver. 13 he explains ver. 8 thus: "Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest." Notwithstanding the efforts of conservative scholars like Keil and Bredenkamp to explain ver. 8 as a reference to the intermissions in, *e.g.*, the daily sacrifice, brought about by the desert wanderings, or to the arbitrariness and illegality of the generation which had brought judgment upon themselves by refusal to obey Yahweh in attacking Canaan, it still seems impossible to accept that view. Of course if we knew that Moses was the giver of all these laws, these words would have to be explained away in some such fashion. But if they are approached by an inquirer seeking to discover whether they all are Mosaic, sound exegesis demands that they should be taken as Dillmann and others take them. In the plain sense of words Moses here admits that, up till the time at which he is speaking, sacrifices were offered wherever men chose, and that he had participated in the practice. And observe, he does not refer to the Levitical law. He does not say

this conduct of ours is a sin which we must repent of and turn from at once. He calmly permits this state of things to continue after Israel is in Canaan, and looks forward with equanimity to its continuance till the Temple shall be erected in Jerusalem. With this passage before us we ask, Can this be the same inspired legislator who thirty-eight years before compelled sacrifice at one central altar on pain of death?

The traditional hypothesis being thus encompassed with difficulties, students of the Old Testament have sought another which would correspond better with all the data. Relying upon the fact that the author of Deuteronomy founds his book almost entirely on JE, and that if he knows some of the laws and some of the facts mentioned in P only, there are no proofs that he knew that book as we have it, they put it aside in this matter also. Immediately, when that is done, light breaks in upon our problem. If we take Exod. xxiv. 20 in the natural sense given to it above, sacrifice at various altars was permitted from Sinai onwards, the only limitation being that there should have been, at the place chosen, authentic proof of a theophany or some other manifestation of the Divine presence. That is the state of things out of which Moses speaks in Deuteronomy. It will be noticed, however, that there is a slight contradiction of Exod. xx. 24. The Moses of Deuteronomy speaks as if every man's arbitrary choice had been his only guide. Probably, however, with his mind full of the stringent unity he desires to see, he speaks hyperbolically of the looseness of the former law, and means nothing else than the practice prescribed by it. In all ways this view is supported by the history. From the patriarchs till the time of Samuel, the practice was to sacrifice at various altars.[1]

[1] Cf. for the passages on which this statement is founded Driver's *Introduction*, p. 80, and note in small print.

Consequently, according to both the Book of the Covenant and Deuteronomy, and according to the history, the worship of Yahweh at sacred places throughout the land was legal, until the Temple was erected at Jerusalem. The centralisation of worship was, consequently, a new thing when the division of the kingdoms took place, and was not an express law till Deuteronomy. If that book was not written till perhaps Hezekiah's day, the fact will account as nothing else will do for Elijah's words (1 Kings xix. 10), "The children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword." Even in the presence of Yahweh he, without rebuke, calls the altars in the Northern Kingdom His.

The first attempt we know of to centralise worship was made by Hezekiah; a second and more strenuous attempt was made under Josiah, but the work was not actually accomplished till after the Return from the Captivity. All the facts taken together suggest that the movement towards centralisation was an age-long development. At first all holy places might be sacrificed at, though a certain primacy belonged to a central sanctuary, and this may have been stamped by Moses with approval. When the Solomonic Temple was built the primacy began to take the form of a claim for exclusive validity. The experiences in both kingdoms strengthened that claim, by showing that if Yahwism was to be kept pure the worship at the High Places must be abolished. The inspired writer of Deuteronomy then completed Moses' work by embodying that which had been always a tendency of the Mosaic system, and had now become a necessity, in his revisal of the Mosaic legislation. This was adopted by the nation under Josiah, and the Priest Codex must in that case represent a later stage of the development, when the centralisation was neither a tendency nor a demand, but

a realised fact. Such a process accounts much better for the facts than the traditional belief; and though it is not free from difficulties it at least releases us from the confusion of mind which the ordinary supposition forces upon us.

The inquiry as to the agents or the cultus need not detain us so long. In the Book of the Covenant no priests are mentioned at all. The person addressed, the "thou" of these chapters, which is either the individual Israelite or the whole community, has been held by some to indicate that the individual offerer was the only agent in sacrifice. But that is to press the word too far. Even in Leviticus, while the whole people are addressed, the actions enjoined or prohibited are such as are done by "any man of them," and in Deut. xii. 13 we have precisely the same expression, "Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest," used at a time when there was undeniably a priestly tribe and even the High Places had a regular priesthood. But while in Exod. xx.—xxiii. there is no evidence to show whether a priesthood existed, in the previous chapter (xix. 22, 24) priests who "come near to Yahweh" are twice mentioned. This would be a fact of the first importance were it not that the words occur in a passage which is admitted to be in its present shape the work of the later editor. Dillmann maintains, and with good reason, that he has inserted and adapted here a fragment of J. If so then J may have held the view that there were priests before Sinai was reached, but under the circumstances we cannot be certain that the mention of them may not be an anachronism introduced by the later hand. In favour of the view that it is so is the fact that in the account given by JE of the ratification of the Covenant between Yahweh and the people (Exod. xxiv. 1 ff.), Moses erected an altar and then "sent the young men of

the children of Israel which offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto Yahweh." He himself however performed the specially priestly act of sprinkling the blood upon the altar. Had there been priests or Levites accustomed to perform priestly functions, we should have expected them to act, instead of "the young men of the children of Israel." But, on the other hand, we must not omit to notice that the Levites occupy in all these transactions, as narrated by JE, a very prominent position. Dillmann,[1] as we have seen, separating J and E, considers that the passages in which priests before the Sinaitic legislation are spoken of belong to J, and adds: "Indeed, it appears from Exod. iv. 14, 'Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother?' and xxiv. 1, 9, that for him even then the Levites were the priestly persons." To these passages Driver adds Exod. xviii. 12: "And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God; and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God." Further, Nadab and Abihu are Levites, nay, sons of Aaron, and in Exod. xxiv. 1 and 9 they go with Moses, Aaron, and the seventy elders as the complete representation of the people, and Moses, himself a Levite, performs all the greater priestly acts.[2] Moreover JE knows of the ark, and speaks frequently of the "tent of meeting" (Exod. xxxiii. 7 ff.; Numb. xi. 24 f., xii. 4 ff. and Deut. xxxi. 14 ff.). But a very notable thing in connection with the inquiry as to the performers of priestly duties appears in Exod. xxxiii. 7 ff., where E's account of the "tent of meeting" is given. When Moses turned again into the camp "his minister (*mesharetho*) Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tent," yet Joshua

[1] Dillmann, *Exodus and Leviticus*, p. 199.
[2] Josh. iii. 14-17 and *passim*.

was an Ephraimite (1 Chron. vii. 22-27). In Exod. xxxii. 29, however, the same authority describes the consecration of the Levites to the priesthood, after the apostasy of the golden calf.

In Deuteronomy, on the contrary, the priests are very prominent; they are called, however, the Levitical priests, or priests simply, but never sons of Aaron. The whole tribe of Levi is regarded as priestly in some sense. They constitute, in fact, a clerical order, though there are clear indications of ranks, of men being assigned to special duties. Curiously enough, the tribe thus highly honoured is spoken of as being notoriously and all but universally poor. No sacrifice can legitimately be offered without them; and, though the question of the place of sacrifice has not yet been finally settled, the position of the Levitical priests as sacrificers is so entirely established that it is regarded as needing neither assertion nor justification. Nay, in one passage, Deut. x. 6—which there is no valid reason, except the wish to get rid of its contents, for supposing to belong to another authority than D[1]—the hereditary succession to the chief place among the priesthood is assigned to the family of Aaron. In xviii. 5 also the hereditary character of the priesthood is asserted in the words, "For Yahweh thy God hath chosen him—*i.e.* the priest—out of all thy tribes, to stand to minister in the name of Yahweh, *him and his sons for ever*." As for the body of the Levites, their position is somewhat ill-defined. On the authority of xviii. 6 ff. many claim that at the date of Deuteronomy every Levite was, at least potentially, a priest, that in fact Levite and priest were synonymous. But, as will appear in the exposition of the verses referred to, that is a very questionable proposition.

[1] Driver, *Introduction*, p. 145; Oettli, *Deuteronomy*, p. 7; Kuenen, *H.K. O.*, p. 113.

Nevertheless it cannot be denied that in Deuteronomy the line between priests and Levites is a very indistinct one; there is *prima facie* reason to believe that it could be passed, and the gap between the two is certainly not nearly so wide as it appears to be in the undeniably post-exilic literature.

In the Priest Codex again, the priesthood is confined exclusively to the house of Aaron, with the high priest at their head. The Levites have no possible way of entrance into the priesthood. They are Yahweh's gift to the priests, and are confined most strictly to the duty of waiting upon these in the ministration of the Sanctuary. They have none but the most subordinate share in the sacrifices; they are shut out from the holy places of the Tabernacle; and they have assigned to them cities in which they may dwell together when they are not on duty at the Sanctuary. There is no word there of Levites being poor, and altogether the position of the tribe is, through the priests, much more dignified and prosperous in a worldly sense than we found it to be in Deuteronomy.

Now, taking all these data together, we find here, just as we did in the previous section, that the Levitical law is a disturbing element between Exodus and Deuteronomy. If we take it out of the way, J, E, and D harmonise well enough. The main difference is that the latter shows the same fundamental conditions as we find in the former, only consolidated and developed by time, but by a longer time than forty years. In fact D makes explicit that importance of the Levites which is only hinted at and foreshadowed in JE. They have come to be the only authorised agents of sacrifice; they have a hereditary headship in the house of Aaron; various orders and degrees must be held to exist (cf. Deut. xviii. 1 ff.). Compared with this state of things, the Levitical arrangements of P, supposed to have been given thirty-eight years

before, are very different. In every respect they are more definite, more detailed, and show a much more differentiated organisation than those sketched in Deuteronomy. These latter indicate a state of matters which would suit admirably as an embryonic stage of the full-grown Levitical system, and which can hardly be fitted into their place otherwise.

It is suggested, in reply, that allusions in Deuteronomy *imply* the existence of a system of a much more elaborate kind than any that we could construct from the explicit statements of the book, and that is certainly true. But no reasonable interpretation of these allusions can lead us to a system identical with that in P. Nor can Deuteronomy's use of the name Levites (though undoubtedly it has been pressed by some too far) be held to be consistent with the public recognition of the "great gulf fixed" in P between the Aaronic priests and the Levites as a body. Nor will the fact that Deuteronomy is the people's book, and is consequently not called upon to go into technical details, cover the difference. Indeed nothing will, short of recognising the fact that, as publicly acknowledged organisations, the tribe of Levi in P and the tribe of Levi in D are different, and that the state of things in D's day is earlier than that in P. If this is not so, then the Levitical legislation, conceived as given by Moses, must be held to have proved impracticable, and Deuteronomy must then be regarded as an abrogation of it for the time.

And the same conclusions suggest themselves if we look more closely into the curious fact that Deuteronomy always speaks of the Levites as poor. Some have supposed that this poverty is the result of the centralisation of the cultus which the author demands, and that the constant insistence that the Levite shall be invited to all sacrificial feasts, along with the widow and the orphan, and other

helpless classes, is a provision against the poverty to be brought upon them by the abolition of the High Places. But that is not so. We know the manner of the Deuteronomist when he is providing for contingencies arising from the new state of things he wishes to bring about, and it is quite different from his manner here. Clearly, the Levites were poor before the suppression of the High Places, and were so, as Deuteronomy tells us, from the fact that they had no inheritance in the land. But that poverty is not consistent with their whole position as sketched in the Levitical legislation. There we have the Levites launched as a regularly organised priestly corporation, endowed with ample revenues, and ruled and represented by a high priest of the family of Aaron, clothed with powers almost royal, surrounded by a priestly nobility of his own family and by a bodyguard of tribesmen entirely at his disposal. Such a body never has remained chronically and notoriously poor. In the wilderness they would not be so in contrast with others, for all were poor, and there was nothing to hinder the Levites having cattle as the other tribes had, and being on the same level as they. In the promised land, instead of becoming poor, they would at once enter upon the enjoyment of their various tithes and dues, and would moreover have such a share in the booty of Canaan as would more than make up at first for their want of a heritage. The priests were to receive one five-hundredth part of the army's half, and the Levites the fiftieth share of the people's half (Numb. xxxi. 28 ff.). Gradually, too, they would be put in possession of the priestly cities. Evidently, therefore, if the Levites were ever poor, it cannot have been till some time after Israel had been settled in the land, and then only if P's laws and organisations of the tribe were not enforced.

Deuteronomy supports the same argument. Since

want of a heritage was the cause of the Levites' poverty, they cannot have been *exceptionally* poor in the wilderness. Nor can they have been poor during the time of the conquest; for even if the Levitical law was in force and the tribe was then wholly organised for the priesthood, they must have shared in the fighting and the spoil. But if the order of legislation, as we maintain, was (1) Exodus xx.—xxiii., (2) Deuteronomy, (3) the Priest Codex, then as the booty from war ceased to be a source of income, the Levites as a body remaining nomads, while the other tribes became agricultural, would necessarily become poor in comparison with their fellow-countrymen. It is out of that state of things the Deuteronomist speaks.[1]

The same conclusions follow when the regulations are examined which bear upon the support of the priestly tribe. The outstanding matters in this department are tithes and firstlings. Space will not admit of a full discussion of these topics; but if the reader will compare, in regard to tithes, Numb. xviii. 21-24 and Lev. xxvii. 30, 32, with Deut. xii. 17, and in regard to firstlings Numb. xviii. 18 with Deut. xii. 6, 17 f., and xv. 19 f., he will see that the application of tithes and of firstlings according to Deuteronomy is quite different from that in the Levitical legislation. The difference is such as will not comport with the hypothesis of a single legislator and a consistent legislation. Expedients with a view to solve the difficulty have been suggested by Keil and others; but each of those expedients is burdened with specific difficulties of its own.

The inevitable conclusion from all this would seem to be that in the Deuteronomic as in the Levitical laws we have not the legislation of Moses or of his age alone. The roots of all the legislative codes are Mosaic, but in all

[1] See further in exposition of chapter xvii; xviii.

save perhaps the Book of the Covenant the trunk and branches are of much later growth. The authors of them are not careful to distinguish what came from Moses himself from that which had been developed out of it under the influence of the same inspiration. In both D and P there were Mosaic elements, and in both there are laws not given by him. To disentangle these completely now is impossible, and it is probably best for expository purposes to take the codes as giving what the Mosaic legislation had become at the time of the writer. What we have in Deuteronomy therefore cannot be better described than in Driver's words (*Introduction*, p. 85), as "the prophetic re-formulation and adaptation to new needs of an older legislation." Its relations to the other codes are as the same critic states (p. 71): "It is an *expansion* of that in JE (Exod. xx.—xxiii.); it is, in several features, *parallel* to that in Lev. xvii.—xxvi.; it contains *allusions* to laws such as those codified in some parts of P, while from those contained in other parts of P it differs widely." And the state of things in which these various codes originated is more and more coming to be conceived in the manner stated by Dr. A. B. Davidson.[1] "It is evident," he says, "that two streams of thought, both issuing from a fountain as high up as the very origin of the nation, ran side by side down the whole history of the people, the prophetic and the priestly. In the one Jehovah is a moral ruler, a righteous king and judge, who punishes iniquity judicially or forgives sins freely of His mercy. In the other He is a Person dwelling among His people in a house, a Holy Being or Nature, sensitive to every uncleanness in all that is near Him, and requiring its removal by lustrations and atonement. Those cherishing the latter circle of conceptions might be as zealous for the

[1] *Ezekiel*, Introduction, p. liv. f.

Lord of Hosts as the prophets. And the developments of the national history would extend their conceptions and lead to the amplification of practices embodying them, just as they extended the conceptions of the prophets. A growth of priestly ideas is quite as probable as a growth of prophetic ideas. That the streams ran apart is no evidence that they were not equally ancient and always contemporaneous, for we see Jeremiah and Ezekiel both flourishing in one age. At one point in the history the prophetic stream was swelled by an inflow from the priestly, as is seen in Deuteronomy, and from the Restoration downwards both streams appear to coalesce."

The actual date of Deuteronomy still remains to be settled. Already it has been brought down to post-Solomonic days. How much later must it probably be put? The book must have been written before the eighteenth year of Josiah, 621 B.C., for the Book of the Law which was then found in the Temple was undoubtedly not the whole Pentateuch, but approximately Deut. i.—xxvi. But it can hardly have been produced in Josiah's reign, because it would never have been permitted to drop out of sight had it been known to that pious king and the reforming high priest Hilkiah. On the other hand, it can hardly have been written or known before Hezekiah's reforms, for otherwise it would have been made the basis of them, as it was made the basis of Josiah's. Probably, therefore, we may date it between Hezekiah and Josiah. Indeed we may with great likelihood affirm, as Robertson Smith suggests, that it was the need of guidance caused by Hezekiah's reforms which suggested and called out this book.[1]

But, say some, if the body of the book is not Mosaic, then this is nothing else but forgery, and no forged or

[1] *Additional Answer to the Libel*, p. 89.

even pseudonymous book can be inspired! Others again, most gratuitously, suppose that Hilkiah found the book only because he had forged it and put it where it was found. But there is neither need nor room for such suppositions; and our effort must be to conceive to ourselves the means by which such a book could come into existence, and be found as it was, without fraud on the part of any one.

To modern, and especially Western notions, it seems difficult to conceive any legitimate process by which a book of comparatively modern date could be attributed, so far as its main part is concerned, to Moses, and published as Mosaic. But if we take into account the character of Deuteronomy as only an extension and adaptation of the Book of the Covenant set in a framework of affectionate exhortation, and that all men then believed that the Book of the Covenant was Mosaic, we can see better how such action might be considered legitimate. Even on modern and Western principles we can see that; but at that early time and in the East, literary methods and literary ideas were so different from ours that there may have been customs which made the publication of a book in this way not only natural but right. An example from modern India will make this clear. Among the sacred books of the Hindus one of the most famous is the *Laws of Manu*. This is a collection of religious, moral, and ceremonial laws much like the Book of Leviticus. It is generally admitted that it was not the work of any one man, but of a school of legal writers and lawgivers who lived at very various times, each of whom, with a clear conscience and as a matter of course, adapted the works of his predecessors to the need of his own day. And this practice, together with the belief in its legitimacy, survives to this day. In his *Early Law and Custom* (p. 161) Sir Henry Maine tells us that "A gentleman in a high

official position in India has a native friend who has devoted his life to preparing a new Book of Manu. He does not, however, expect or care that it should be put in force by any agency so ignoble as a British-Indian Legislature, deriving its powers from an Act of Parliament not a century old. He waits till there arises a king in India who will serve God and take the law from the new 'Manu' when he sits in his Court of Justice." There is here no question of fraud. This Indian gentleman considers that his book *is* the Book of Manu, and would be amazed if any one should question its identity because he had edited it; and he supposes that the king he looks for, if he should come in his day, would accept and act upon it as a Divine authority. So strangely different are Eastern notions from those of the West. It is legitimate to suppose that *this* Eastern book originated in something of the same fashion. In the evil days of persecution, when all the prophetic spokesmen were cut off, and when the priests were occupying the chief position among the supporters of pure religion, some pious man, inspired, but not with the prophetic inspiration, set himself, like this modern Hindu, to re-write and adapt the legislation which he believed to be Mosaic to the needs of his own day. Altering the fundamental points as little as might be, he developed it to meet the evils which were threatening the Mosaic religion; and he inspired it with the passion for righteousness and the love of God which had already thrilled the hearts of faithful men in Israel through the ministry of the great prophets. Hoping for the coming of a king who should serve God and judge Israel out of this new Book of Moses, but while the darkness still clouded the future, he died, committing his book to some temple chamber where he might hope that it would be discovered when God's set time should come. In such a supposition there is perhaps

something to shock the conventional theories of our time. But, so far as can be seen, there is nothing to shock any open-minded man who knows how widely ancient and Eastern thought differs from modern and Western thought. It is certain that at this day Eastern men of the highest character and of the most burning zeal for religion would act in this manner without a qualm of conscience. We may well believe, therefore, that in ancient days it was the same. If so, this was a literary method which inspiration might well use; and the supposition that Deuteronomy was so produced is certainly more consistent with its history and character than any other. It explains how it so exactly met the needs of the time and summed up all its aspirations; and it gives to its claim of inspiration a new support by laying bare the circumstances of its birth and its psychological presuppositions.

But it may still be asked, what are we to think of the Mosaic speeches, which, as has been seen, contain, to say the least, much non-Mosaic matter? The answer probably is that in these, as in the laws, the author relies upon earlier documents. From the appearance in the codes of laws which would have little or no meaning if originated in the time of the Deuteronomist, it has rightly been concluded that there are very ancient and Mosaic elements in them. So, in the speeches there are references and allusions that suggest an ancient tradition of a final address of Moses, and perhaps a written account of its general purport, in which even a hope that the worship might be centralised may have been contained.[1] This the author has adapted to his purpose of inciting his contemporaries to be faithful to the Mosaic teaching, and has woven into it all that later experience could suggest

[1] Cf. Driver, art. "Deuteronomy," Smith's *Dictionary*, p. 770.

as effective ground of exhortation. So much as that all ancient historians would have done, and some moderns would do, without the faintest intention to deceive, or any feeling of guilt; and so much may probably have been done here. Delitzsch,[1] Robertson Smith,[2] and Driver[3] are all at one as to this, and in the proofs they produce of the necessity of accepting this view. In the words of Driver, "It is the uniform practice of the Biblical historians in both the Old and New Testaments to represent their characters as speaking in words and phrases which cannot have been those actually used, but which they themselves select and frame for them." The speeches of David in Samuel and Chronicles serve for examples. In Samuel he speaks in the language of Samuel, in Chronicles in the language of Chronicles. "In some of these cases," Driver continues, "the authors no doubt had information as to what was actually said on the occasions in question, which they recast in their own words, only preserving, perhaps, a few characteristic expressions; in other cases, they merely gave articulate expression to the thoughts and feelings which it was presumed that the persons in question would have entertained. In the Deuteronomic speeches both these characteristic methods have probably been employed, and we must just accept the inspired record for what it reveals itself to be, setting aside, with the inevitable sighs, our own *à priori* assumptions of what it ought to be."

These then are the conclusions regarding Deuteronomy on which the exposition offered here will rest. They have been reached after a careful consideration of the evidence on both sides, and are stated here not altogether

[1] *Pentateuch Kritische Studien*, X.

[2] *Answer to the Form of Libel*, p. 34. Note: where Arnold and Masson's *Life of Milton* are referred to.

[3] Art. "Deuteronomy," Smith's *Bible Dict.*, pp. 769 ff.

without regret. For, as Robertson Smith has well said,[1] "to the ordinary believer the Bible is precious as the practical rule of faith and life in which God still speaks directly to his heart. No criticism can be otherwise than hurtful to faith if it shakes the confidence with which the simple Christian turns to his Bible, assured that he can receive every message which it brings to his soul as a message from God Himself." Now, though it can be demonstrated that the view of Scripture which permits of such conclusions as those stated above is quite compatible with this believing confidence, there can be little doubt that Christian people will for a time find great difficulty in accepting this assurance. The transition from the old view of inspiration, so complete, comprehensible, and effective as it is, to the newer and less definite doctrine, cannot fail to be trying, and the introduction of it here cannot but be a disturbing influence which it would have been greatly preferable to avoid.

It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that to the minds of the working ministry and of their earnest fellow-labourers, who come into constant contact with the actual needs of men, the change should be unwelcome. But it cannot now, in my judgment, be avoided. Even the best and most scholarly work of those who still hold the traditional view does not convince. Rather it is their writings, more even than those on the modern side, which make it clear that the traditional view can no longer be held. These writers admit the facts upon which their opponents' case rests, and then explain them all away, harmonising everything by a crowd of hypotheses, often scholarly, generally acute, but almost always such as can be accepted only if we know beforehand that the view they support is true. But far too many hypotheses are needed. Each case has to be

[1] *Answer*, pp. 41 f.

set right by a special effort of the imagination; while the new view has this great advantage, that it makes room for all the facts, by a hypothesis, suggested not by one difficulty, but by almost all the discrepancies and difficulties which are encountered. And, after all, this view does not move men away from the central truth of inspiration, even as it was conceived by the last generation. Apart from any care for averting errors in detail which can be ascribed to Divine wisdom according to the old view or the new, the central thing in both surely is the revelation of God Himself. It was always God that was held to be revealed, and this the advocates of the newer view insist upon most strenuously. They hold that chosen men, the wisest, best, most truthful of their respective generations, those who travailed most in thought, received exceptional impressions of the Divine nature. They saw God, and their whole being bore the impress henceforth of this illumination. In every word and act the light they had received found expression for itself. They did not receive this revelation in mere propositions about God, which had to be carefully repeated with minute verbal accuracy. They saw, and their natures were in their degree uplifted, changed, and harmonised with the Divine. They could no more be false in speaking of what they had thus experienced, than a sincere and tender nature can be false in speech or thought about death, when it once has found its love frustrated and overborne by that dread messenger of God. The impression in both cases is true as it is final, and it will triumphantly convey itself to others with substantial and effective truth, whatever the man's knowledge or ignorance otherwise may be. When a man has received an impression, or a sight of God which has shaken his very soul, will it be lost in its essential parts because in the speech in which he utters it he shows ignorance of

science, or accepts as simply true the historic knowledge of his day? The thing is impossible. The light that is within him must shine out, even though the medium through which it shines be here and there blackened by imperfection. In the fundamental point, therefore, the old school of critics and the new are entirely at one. On the basis of this essential harmony it should be possible for each to speak to the other for edification. This is what has been attempted here; and if those who hold by the Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy will tolerate the opposite view, they will find that in dealing with the Scriptures as a revelation of God, and as an infallible guide in all that concerns religious and moral truth, there is no difference. To make the sacred word living and powerful as an instrument of spiritual regeneration is our common effort; and our common hope must be that, if in anything we have been led into error, the mistake may be discovered and removed, before it has wrought evil in the Church of God.

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORIC SETTING OF DEUTERONOMY

WHATEVER may be the date of the first publication of Deuteronomy, there can be no doubt that it was accepted by Josiah and the people of his time with an energy and thoroughness of which we find no previous example. Its main lessons were learnt and put into practice by them, and from that period the religious conceptions of Deuteronomy dominated and formed the Hebrew mind in a manner of which we have no earlier trace. For practical purposes, therefore, we may say that this was the Deuteronomic period. The book gathered up and embodied the higher strivings of that time; and to understand it thoroughly we need to know the history of which it was, in part at least, the outcome Indeed, on any supposition as to age and authorship, a study of the history of Judah from the end of the eighth century B.C. to the end of the seventh is indispensable if we would adequately understand our book, for that was the time when the book is seen entering as a living force into the history of Israel.

Unfortunately, however, there are few periods of Israelite history as to which we have less of reliable information. During much of the period the main currents of the national life ran contrary to all better influences, and in such epochs the compilers of the Book of Kings took no interest. For the most part they were content to "look and pass," gathering up the results of such times of

declension in a few condemnatory words. It is only when the nation is on the upward slope that they enter into details. They wrote at a time when the purpose of God in their national life was becoming clear, and the splendour of it possessed them so that nothing else but the increase of this purpose seemed worthy of any intenser contemplation. Victories and defeats, successes and failures, and last of all the tremendous catastrophe of the Exile, had taught them this discernment; and they pressed forward so eagerly to record the deeds and thoughts of those who had learned the secret of Yahweh that they had eyes for nothing else. Consequently the eighty years after the fall of Samaria, which for our purpose would be so extremely instructive, are passed over in all our sources, almost without mention. But there are some facts and events of which we can be entirely sure; and from these it is possible to conceive in outline the way in which things must have shaped themselves in these eventful years.

Brought about as it had been by the appeal of Ahaz to the king of Assyria for help against the continual aggressions of Syria and Israel, the fall of Samaria must have come to the king and people of Judah as a relief. Their enemy had fallen, and they would henceforth be free from the anxiety and harassment which Israel's enmity had caused. But those must have been blind indeed with whom this feeling was permanent. Very soon it must have become apparent to all thoughtful men in Judah that, if they had been freed from the worrying and exasperating enmity of their kindred, their very success had brought them into the presence of a much more serious foe. With Assyria on their immediate frontier, settled in the lands both of Damascus and Samaria, they must have felt themselves exposed to chances and dangers they had never hitherto had to face. Under the old conditions, except

during comparatively short periods when there was actual war between the two kingdoms, Israel had stood between Judah and any danger from the North. But now the people of the Southern Kingdom were summoned from "the safe glad rear to the dreadful van." Henceforth no patriot could fail to be haunted by fear of that ambitious and conquering Assyrian nation. The whole of Hezekiah's reign was filled with more or less convulsive efforts to maintain the independence of Judah. These were giving but faint promise of success, when the great deliverance of Jerusalem foretold by Isaiah gave the king a breathing space, and raised the highest hopes in the minds of his people. It seemed for a little quite possible that the ancient independence of Israel might be restored. To many it seemed that the Messianic times were at hand; faith in Yahweh carried all before it. But Hezekiah died not long after; and in the succeeding reigns of Manasseh and Amon the whole temper and policy of Israel underwent a most serious and reactionary change.

The causes of this are not far to seek. During the greater part of Hezekiah's reign Isaiah had received only moderate support. According to his own vision of his future work, he was to preach without success; he was to say, "Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye, but perceive not"; and, so far as the mass of the people were concerned, that prevision was justified. Only the astounding success with which his opposition to the Assyrians had been crowned had turned the tide of popular opinion in his favour. It was probably, therefore, only then that Hezekiah's reforms were instituted. They had been too short a time in force at his death to have sent out their roots into the national life. But that was not all. One of the most characteristic points in all prophecy was that the *time* when the full Messianic Kingdom should appear was never clearly defined. Neither

the Prophet nor his hearers knew when it would be. It loomed always as a bright but vague background to the deliverance which lay immediately before them; and in almost every case neither speaker nor hearers had any conception of the long and weary way which divided those sunlit mountain peaks from the dark and threatening pass which they were approaching. Now the literal interpretation of Isaiah's prophecies with regard to the deliverance from Assyria had inevitably led the mass of the people to believe that the raising of the siege of Jerusalem would mean the immediate destruction of Assyria, and the advent of the Messianic day of peace and glory for Israel. But the facts completely falsified that expectation. Instead of being destroyed Assyria only grew more powerful, and instead of the Messianic time there was only the old position of vassalage to Assyria. So men grew weary, and said then as they have said so often since, "All things are as they have been from the beginning, and where is the promise of His coming?" The true-hearted said it with sadness; and the false-hearted, saying it in mockery and unbelief, fell back upon the old heathenish test, and said, "The gods of Assyria are stronger than Yahweh, and we must give them a place in our adoration." With the bulk of the people this required no really great change in their point of view. They had believed in Yahweh and agreed to purify His worship, because He had proved Himself stronger than Sennacherib and his gods; and now when, in the long run, Assyria was triumphing, they must have seemed to themselves only to be following the teachings of experience in giving the host of heaven equal honour with their own ancestral God. The reaction, therefore, was more in the outward expression than in principle, and we can easily understand how it was so swift and so universal. Manasseh, Hezekiah's son, had probably

opposed his father's policy, as the heir-apparent has so often opposed the policy of the reigning monarch; and if, as many suppose, Hezekiah lived for sixteen years after the destruction of Sennacherib's host, Manasseh came to the throne just when men's minds were most weary with hope deferred, and when the Assyrian success was about to reach its highest point before its final fall.

Accordingly Manasseh would seem to have undone at once all that his father and Isaiah had accomplished. Nay, he went further in the introduction of idolatry than any even of the idolatrous kings who had preceded him. In the Book of Kings the charges made against him are three:—1st, that he introduced the worship of the host of heaven according to the Assyrian ritual; 2nd, that he took part in the Moloch-worship; and 3rd, that he restored the old semi-Canaanite worship which it had been Isaiah's most strenuous effort to root out. And this policy, evil as it was in the eyes of all who cared for the higher destinies of Israel, had at once great and striking external success. For it meant complete submission to Assyria, a willing vassalage from which even the wish for independence had disappeared. The heart of the old Israelite independence had been faith in Yahweh and confidence in Israel's calling as His people. Even so late as Isaiah's day it had been faith in Yahweh which had kept Hezekiah steady in his opposition to apparently overwhelming force. But now Manasseh and the people who supported him exalted the gods of Assyria as an even surer refuge than Yahweh had been. Having made that admission, there was nothing left for them but to humble themselves under the mighty hand of the great king and his great gods. And this Israel under Manasseh did most thoroughly. As Stade has strikingly said, "The Temple of the one God of Israel became a Pantheon." The feeble attempts which Ahaz had made in the same direction were utterly

swept out of men's memory by the completeness of Manasseh's apostasy. With this degradation of the religious faith there also came, naturally, an intellectual degradation. Superstition, baser even than idolatry, seized upon the minds of men, and illegitimate efforts to pry into the future or to influence the destinies of men by magic and incantations became part of the popular fashion of the day. The old religion of Israel had sternly set itself against all such debasing practices. Alone amid the religions of the ancient world, it had relentlessly refused the help of necromancy and magic generally. But the barrier the religion of Yahweh had erected fell at once when its purity and uniqueness had been sacrificed, and Manasseh gave himself up to "practise augury and to use enchantments, and to deal with them that had familiar spirits and with wizards." And to superstition he also added cruelty. Not content with his signal victory over all the best impulses of the past, not content with the applause of the multitude who gladly followed him to do evil, he endeavoured to force those whose work he had destroyed to bow before the gods they both hated and despised. We know too little of the circumstances of the time to be sure of his motives, but his action may have been founded upon a craven fear that if he did not suppress the voices of those who spoke for freedom, he might be visited with the anger of the Assyrian king. Or it may have been that feeling, so powerfully expressed in Browning's poem "Instans Tyrannus," which makes a tyrant feel that all his life is made bitter to him if there remain within his power one free man whom he cannot bend to his will. In any case it is certain that he attacked the prophetic party with sanguinary fury. Though he had the gods of the great battalions on his side, he was dimly afraid of the power of ideas; and, so far as faithful men were concerned, he instituted a "reign of terror." Accord-

ing to the graphic statement of the historian, "he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood from lip to lip," and for the time at least was able to silence righteousness so far as public utterance was concerned. There is a tradition that even Isaiah fell a victim to his fury, being sawn asunder between two planks at his command. It is perhaps not likely that Isaiah had survived so long. But, beyond all doubt, many suffered for their faithfulness to God; and it seems probable that the wonderful picture of the Suffering Servant in the Deutero-Isaiah owes much of its colour to the pathetic and painful memories of this evil time.

All this apostasy brought with it worldly success. Manasseh reigned long, and under him the land had peace. Assyria *could* have no quarrel with a people and a king who anticipated its very desire by eager submission. Peace brought material prosperity. The land was so naturally fertile that it always grew rich when war was kept from its borders. We may surmise, too, that a kind of bastard culture became popular when the Jewish mind had opened to it, for good and evil, a world of myth and song and legend which, if known before, had until now been barred from complete and triumphant entrance by faith in a living God. Once only would Manasseh appear to have asserted himself, and, according to the Book of Chronicles, he was taken prisoner in Jerusalem by the master he had served so well, and learned to know in the bitterness of a Babylonian prison that sycophancy does not always lead to safety. And the wisdom he learned went further even than that. At the end of his life he appears to have wished to undo, at least in some measure, the evil he had laboured throughout his reign to establish and make strong. But he found that to be impossible; and if his repentance was deep and sincere he must have learned how severely the heavenly powers can

punish, by opening a man's eyes to the evil he has done when it cannot be undone. Nor did his late repentance affect his son, for under Amon all things continued in their previous evil course. Indeed the prevailing idolatry had rooted itself so firmly that even in the early years of Josiah, when the prophetic influence was beginning to reappear, it still retained its hold with unshaken power.

But what of the prophetic party during those evil days? Precipitated from power in an instant at Hezekiah's death, it had at once become feeble and obscure. Its leading supporters, we may well believe, had to seek safety in hiding or in flight; and after some of its chief speakers had been cut off, the once dominant party had to take the position of persecuted remnants for whom all public work was impossible. Under such circumstances what could these faithful men do? They could only wait and pray, and prepare for that better day of whose return their faith in Yahweh would not suffer them to despair.

From the position afterwards taken up by the high priest, it would seem probable that the Temple clergy were in full sympathy with the prophetic movement. We need not suppose that that sympathy arose wholly from the tendency of prophetic thought and effort towards the suppression of the High Places. We should probably do the better spirits among the priesthood grievous wrong if we thought that their personal interest was their main motive in supporting even that reform. Notwithstanding the earlier prophets' denunciation of the priests as a class, there can be little doubt that they had advanced, with the better classes of their nation generally, in their appreciation of spiritual religion. And we may well believe that the sight of the havoc which the now degraded worship at the High Places was working in the popular mind made them earnest in their endeavours to restore

the true faith. Privileged as they were, they would naturally be sheltered from the full fury of the persecution. Consequently, when the time came for the supporters of true religion to take their place in public life again, it was natural and inevitable that the priests should be at their head. The fact, too, that Josiah at his accession was a child, for whose guardian no fitter person could be found than the chief priest, gave the future into their hands. But they did not move prematurely. So long as Josiah was a minor they contented themselves with instilling their principles into the mind of the king. In outward political life, so far as we can ascertain, they did not interfere at all, and the ground was moved away from beneath the feet of the idolatrous party, while they thought themselves firmly established. In Josiah's eighteenth year the results of this quiet preparation appeared. In that year Hilkiah, the high priest, told Shaphan the scribe that he had found "the Book of the Law" in the Temple. That this was Deuteronomy, if not altogether, yet practically, as we have it now, there can be but little doubt; and it immediately became the text-book of religion for all that remained of Israel.

Now it is obvious that the whole hopes of the religious party would naturally be fixed upon it. They would turn to it as eagerly as the Reformers turned to the Bible, after it had been rediscovered by Luther at Erfurt. For obviously, if the people could be got to acknowledge the law, the axe would be laid at the root of every evil which they deplored. The High Places would be destroyed; the primacy of the Temple at Jerusalem would be secured; and the prophetic teaching, with its insistence upon judgment and the love of God as the essentials of true worship, would, for the first time, become the dominant influence in civil and religious life. Never since Israel was a nation had the condition of the people called

so loudly for the enforcement of such a law, and now for the first time was there hope that it might be actually enforced. The character of the evils that afflicted the nation, the history of the last half-century, and the teachings of the great canonical prophets had all converged, as it were, to this one point, and we can understand how all who strove for the higher life of Israel would strive that Deuteronomy, whether ancient or modern, should be neglected no longer. The result was that the whole power of the State was thrown into the struggle against idolatry and the half-heathen Bamoth-worship. The prophets and the priests joined hands to spread the principles of the true religion, as voiced by Deuteronomy. Professor Cheyne, in his *Jeremiah*, conjectures, with considerable likelihood, that the break in that prophet's activity which occurred at this time is to be accounted for by the zeal with which he devoted himself to Deuteronomic propaganda throughout the land. In any case, for the moment the purer worship obtained a completer victory than ever before. Unfortunately it came too late and proved too evanescent. But in the inward sphere, the Deuteronomic view of religion as having its centre in love to God, the tender, thoughtful evangelical spirit which distinguishes the whole outlook of its author, laid hold upon all the higher minds that came after it. To Jeremiah and to St. Paul alike, it, *par excellence*, represented the law of God. Produced, or at any rate first prized, at a time when Israel had fallen very low, when evil was triumphant and good persecuted, it recommended and exemplified a cheerful courage, born of faith in the high destiny of Israel and the truth of God. That, more than anything else, helped to bear the ark of the Church over the tumultuous centuries which separated those two great servants of God, and when Christ appeared it was seen that this book, more than any in the Old Testament save

perhaps the Psalms, had anticipated His cardinal teachings regarding the attitude of man to God and of man to man. The conflicts and needs of the seventh century B.C., which are so clearly reflected in it, gave inspiration the opportunity it needed to reveal that inner secret of God's Kingdom. Out of defeat and disaster this revelation came, and through times of defeat and backsliding it proved its Divine origin by keeping steadfast and calm those who specially waited for the coming of the Messiah.

CHAPTER III

THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT

DEUT. i.-iii.

AFTER these preliminary discussions we now enter upon the exposition. With the exception of the first two verses of chapter i., concerning which there is a doubt whether they do not belong to Numbers, these three chapters stand out as the first section of our book. Examination shows that they form a separate and distinct whole, not continued in chapter iv.; but there has been a great diversity of opinion as to their authorship and the intention with which they have been placed here. The vocabulary and the style so resemble those of the main parts of the book, that they cannot be entirely separated from them; yet, at the same time, it seems unlikely that the original author of the main trunk of Deuteronomy can have begun his book with this introductory speech from Moses, followed it up with another Mosaic speech, still introductory, in chapter iv, and in chapter v. begun yet another introductory speech running through seven chapters, before he comes to the statutes and judgments which are announced at the very beginning. The current supposition about these chapters, therefore, is that they are the work of a Deuteronomist, a man formed under the influence of Deuteronomy and filled with its spirit, but not the author of the book. This seems to account for the resemblances, and would also explain to

some extent the existence of such a superfluous prologue. But the hypothesis is, nevertheless, not entirely satisfactory. The resemblances are closer than we should expect in the work of different authors; and one feels that the supposed Deuteronomist must have been less sensitive in a literary sense than we have any right to suppose him if he did not feel the incongruity of such a speech in this place. Professor Dillmann has made a very acute suggestion, which meets the whole difficulty in a more natural way. Feeling that the style and language were in all essentials one with those of the central Deuteronomy, he seeks for some explanation which would permit him to assign this section to the author of the book himself. He suggests that as originally written this was a historical introduction leading up to the central code of laws; a historical preface, in fact, which the author of Deuteronomy naturally prefixed to his book. *Ex hypothesi* he had not the previous books, Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, before him as we have them. These now form a historical introduction to Deuteronomy of a very minute and elaborate kind; but he had to embody in his own book all of the past history of his people that he wished to emphasise. But when the editor who arranged the Pentateuch as we now have it inserted Deuteronomy in its present place, he found that he had a double historical preface, that in the previous books and this in Deuteronomy itself. As reverence forbade the rejection of these chapters, he took refuge in the expedient of turning the originally impersonal narrative into a speech of Moses; which he could all the more blamelessly do as the probability is that the whole book was regarded in his time as the work of Moses. This hypothesis, if it can be accepted, certainly accounts for all the phenomena presented by these chapters—the similarity of language, the archæological notes in the speech, and the historic colour in the statements regarding Edom, for

example, which corresponds to early feeling, not to post-exilic thought at all. It has besides the merit of reducing the number of anonymous writers to be taken account of in the Pentateuch, a most desirable thing in itself. Lastly, it gives us in Deuteronomy a compact whole more complete in all its parts than almost any other portion of the Old Testament, certainly more so than any of the books containing legislation.

Moreover, that the Deuteronomic reinforcement and expansion of the Mosaic legislation, as contained in the Book of the Covenant, should begin with such a history of Yahweh's dealings with His people, is entirely characteristic of Old Testament Revelation. In the main and primarily, what the Old Testament writers give us is a history of how God wrought, how He dealt with the people He had chosen. In the view of the Hebrew writers, God's first and main revelation of Himself is always in conduct. He showed Himself good and merciful and gentle to His people, and then, having so shown Himself, He has an acknowledged right to claim their obedience. As St. Paul has so powerfully pointed out, the law was secondary, not primary. Grace, the free love and choice of God, was always the beginning of true relations with Him, and only after that had been known and accepted does He look for the true life which His law is to regulate. Naturally, therefore, when the author of Deuteronomy is about to press upon Israel the law in its expanded form, to call them back from many aberrations, to summon them to a reformation and new establishment of the whole framework of their lives, he turns back to remind them of what their past had been. Law, therefore, is only a secondary deposit of Revelation. If we are true to the Biblical point of view we shall not look for the Divine voice only, or even chiefly, in the legal portions of the Scripture. God's full revelation of Himself will be seen in the process and the

completion of that age-long movement, which was begun when Israel first became a nation by receiving Yahweh as their God, and which ended with the life and death of Him who summed up in Himself all that Israel was called, but failed, to be.

That is the ruling thought in Scripture about Revelation. God reveals Himself in history; and by the persistent thoroughness with which the Scriptural writers grasp this thought, the unique and effective character of the Biblical Revelation is largely accounted for. Other nations, no doubt, looked back at times upon what their gods had done for them, and those who spoke for these gods may often have claimed obedience and service from their people on the ground of past favour and under threats of its withdrawal. But earlier than any other people which has affected the higher races of mankind, Israel conceived of God as a moral power with a will and purpose which embraced mankind. Further, in the belief which appears in their earliest records, that through them the nations were to be blessed, and that in the future One was coming who would in Himself bring about the realisation of Israel's destiny, they were provided with a philosophy of history, with a conception which was fitted to draw into organic connection with itself all the various fortunes of Israel and of the nations.

Of course, at first much that was involved in their view was not present to any mind. It was the very merit of the germinal revelation made through Moses that it had in it powers of growth and expansion. In no other way could it be a true revelation of God, a revelation which should have in it the fulness, the flexibility, the aloofness from mere local and temporary peculiarities, which would secure its fitness for universal mankind. Any revelation that consists only of words, of ideas even, must, to be received, have some kind of relation

to the minds that are to receive it. If the words and ideas are revealed, as they must be, at a given place and a given time, they must be in such a relation to that place and time that at some period of the world's history they will be found inadequate, needing expansion, which does not come naturally, and then they have to be laid aside as insufficient. But a revelation which consists in acts, which reveals God in intimate, age-long, constant dealings with mankind, is so many-sided, so varied, so closely moulded to the actual and universal needs of man, that it embraces all the fundamental exigencies of human life, and must always continue to cover human experience. From it men may draw off systems of doctrines, which may concentrate the revelation for a particular generation, or for a series of generations, and make it more potently active in these circumstances. But unless the system be kept constantly in touch with the revelation as given in the history, it must become inadequate, false in part, and must one day vanish away.

The revelation then in life is the only possible form for a real revelation of God; and that the writers of the Old Testament in their circumstances and in their time felt and asserted this, is in itself so very great a merit, that it is almost of itself sufficient to justify any claims they may make to special inspiration. The greatest of them saw God at work in the world, and had experience of His influence in themselves, so that they had their eyes opened to His actions as other men had not. The least of them, again, had been placed at the true point of view for estimating aright the significance of the ordinary action of the Divine Providence, and for tracing the lines of Divine action where they were to other men invisible, or at least obscure. And in the records they have left us they have been entirely true to that supremely important point of view. All they deal with in the history is the

moral and spiritual effects of God's dealing; and the great interests, as the world reckons them, of war and conquest, of commerce and art, are referred to only briefly and often only in the way of allusion. To many moderns this is an offence, which they avenge by speaking contemptuously of the mental endowment of the Biblical writers as historians. On the contrary, that these should have kept their eyes fixed only upon that which concerned the religious life of their people, that they should have kept firm hold of the truth that it was there the central importance of the people lay, and that they have given us the material for the formation of that great conception of supernatural revelation by history in which God Himself moves as a factor, is a merit so great that even if it were only a brilliant fancy they might surely be pardoned for ignoring other things. But if, as is the truth, they were tracing the central stream of God's redemptive action in the world, were laying open to our view the steps by which the unapproachably lofty conception of God was built up, which their nation alone has won for the human race, then it can hardly seem a fault that nothing else appealed to them. They have given God to those who were blindly groping for Him, and they have established the standard by which all historic estimates of even modern life are ultimately to be measured.

For though there were in the history of that particular nation, and in the line of preparation for Christ, special miraculous manifestations of God's power and love, which do not now occur, yet no judgment of the course of history is worth anything, even to-day, which does not occupy essentially the Biblical position. Ultimately the thing to be considered is, what hath God wrought? If that be ignored, then the stable and instructive element in history has been kept out of sight, and the mind loses itself hopelessly amid the weltering chaos of second causes.

Froude, in his *History of England*, has noted this, and declares that in the period he deals with it was the religious men who alone had any true insight into the tendency of things. They measured all things, almost too crudely, by the Biblical standard; but so essentially true and fundamental does that show itself to be, that their judgment so formed has proved to be the only sound one. This is what we should expect if God's power and righteousness are the great factors in the drama which the history of man and of the world unfolds to us. That being so, the suicidal folly of the policy of any Church or party which shuts the Bible away from popular use is manifest. It is nothing short of a blinding of the people's eyes, and a shutting of their ears to warning voices which the providential government of the world, when viewed on a large scale, never fails to utter. It renders sound political judgment the prerogative only of the few, and sets them among a people who will turn to any charlatans rather than believe their voice.

It was natural and it was inevitable, therefore, that the author of Deuteronomy, standing, as he did, on the threshold of a great crisis in the history of Israel, should turn the thoughts of his people back to the history of the past. To him the great figure in the history of Israel in those trying and eventful years during which they wandered between Horeb, Kadesh-Barnea, and the country of the Arnon, is Yahweh their God. He is behind all their movements, impelling and inciting them to go on and enjoy the good land He had promised to their fathers. He went before them and fought for them. He bare them in the wilderness, as a man doth bear his son. He watched over them and guided their footsteps in cloud and fire by day and night. Moreover all the nations by whom they passed had been led by Him and assigned their places, and only those nations whom Yahweh chose

had been given into Israel's hand. In the internal affairs of the community, too, He had asserted Himself. They were Yahweh's people, and all their national action was to be according to His righteous character. Especially was the administration of justice to be pure and impartial, yielding to neither fear nor favour because the "judgment is God's." And how had they responded to all this loving favour on the part of God? At the first hint of serious conflict they shrank back in fear. Notwithstanding that the land which God had given them was a good and fruitful country, and notwithstanding the promises of Divine help, they refused to incur the necessary toils and risks of the conquest. Every difficulty they might encounter was exaggerated by them; their very deliverance from Egypt, which they had been wont to consider "their crowning mercy," became to their faithless cowardice an evidence of hatred for them on the part of God.

To men in such a state of mind conquest was impossible; and though, in a spasmodic revulsion from their abject cowardice, they made an attack upon the people they were to dispossess, it ended, as it could not but end, in their defeat and rout. They were condemned to forty years of wandering, and it was only after all that generation was dead that Israel was again permitted to approach the land of promise. But Yahweh had been faithful to them, and when the time was come He opened the way for their advance and gave them the victory and the land. For His love was patient, and always made a way to bless them, even through their sins.

That was the picture the Deuteronomist spread out before the eyes of his countrymen, to the intent that they might know the love of God, and might see that safety lay for them in a willing yielding of themselves to that love. The disastrous results of their wayward and faint-hearted shrinking from this Divine calling is the

only direct threat he uses but in the passage there is another warning, all the more impressive that it is vague and shadowy. God is to the Deuteronomist the universal ruler of the world. The nations are raised up and cast down according to His will, and until He wills it they cannot be dispossessed. But He had willed that fate for many, and at every step of Israel's progress they come upon traces of vanished peoples whom for their sins He had suffered others to destroy. The Emim in Moab, the Zamzummim in Ammon, the Horites in Seir, and the Avvims in Philistia, had all been destroyed before the people who now occupied these lands, and the whole background of the narrative is one of judgment, where mercy had been of no avail. The sword of the Lord is dimly seen in the archæological notes which are so frequent in this section of our book and thus the final touch is given to the picture of the past which is here drawn to be an impulse for the future. While all the foreground represents only God's love and patience overcoming man's rebellion, the background is, like the path of the great pilgrim caravans which year by year make their slow and toilsome way to Mohammedan holy places, strewn with the remains of predecessors in the same path. With stern, menacing finger this great teacher of Israel points to these evidences that the Divine love and patience may be, and have been, outworn, and seems to re-echo in an even more impressive way the language of Isaiah: "The anger of Yahweh was kindled (against these peoples), and He stretched forth His hand (against them) and smote (them); and the hills did tremble, and (their) carcases were as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still." Without a word of direct rebuke he opens his people's eyes to see that shadowy outstretched hand. Behind all the turmoil of the world there is a presence

and a power which supports all who seek good, but which is sternly set against all evil, ready, when the moment comes, "to strike once and strike no more."

Yet another glimpse is given us in these chapters of God's manner of dealing with men. We have seen how He guides and rules His chosen ones. We have seen how He punishes those who have set themselves against the Divine law. And in chapter ii. 30 we are told how men become hardened in their sin, so as to render destruction inevitable. Of Sihon, king of Heshbon, who would not let the Israelites pass by him, the writer says: "Yahweh thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that He might deliver him into thy hand, as appeareth this day." But he does not mean by these expressions to lay upon God the causation of Sihon's obstinacy, so as to make the man a mere helpless victim. His thought rather is, that as God rules all, so to Him must be ultimately traced all that happens in the world. In some sense all acts, whether good or bad, all agencies, whether beneficent or destructive, have their source in and their power from Him. But nevertheless men have moral responsibility for their acts, and are fully and justly conscious of ill desert. Consequently that hardening of spirit or of heart, which at one moment may be attributed solely to God, may at another be ascribed solely to the evil determination of man. The most instructive instance of this is to be found in the history of Pharaoh, when he was commanded to let Israel go. In that narrative, from Exodus iv. to xi., there is repeated interchange of expression. Now it is Yahweh hardened Pharaoh's heart; now, as in viii. 15 and 32, Pharaoh hardened his own heart; and, again, Pharaoh's heart was hardened. In each case the same thing is meant, and the varying expressions correspond only to a difference of standpoint. When Yahweh foretells that the signs He authorises Moses to

show will fail of their effect, it is always "Yahweh will harden Pharaoh's heart," since the main point in contemplation is His government of the world. If, on the other hand, it is the sinful obstinacy of Pharaoh which is prominent in the passage, we have the self-determination of Pharaoh alone set before us. But it is to be noted, and this is indeed the cardinal fact, that Yahweh never is said to harden the heart of a good man, or a man set mainly upon righteousness. It is always those who are guilty of palpable wrongs and acts of evil-doing upon whom God thus works.

Now we know that the author of Deuteronomy had two at least of the ancient historical narratives before him which are combined in Exod. iv.—xi., and he takes up their thinking. Expressed in modern language, the thought is this. When men are found following their own will in defiance of all law and all the restraints of righteousness, that is manifestly not the first stage in their moral declension. This obstinacy in evil is the result and the wages of former evil deeds, beginning perhaps only with careless laxity, but gathering strength and virulence with every wilful sin. Until near the end of a completed growth in wickedness no man deliberately says, "Evil, be thou my good." Nevertheless each act of sin involves a step towards that, and the sinner in this manner hardens himself against all warning. Like the sins which work this obduracy, this hardening is the sinner's own act. The ruin which falls upon his moral nature is his own work. That is the inexorable result of the moral order of the universe, and from it no exception is possible. But if so, God too has been active in all such catastrophes. He has so framed and ordered the world that indulgence in evil must harden in evil. This it was which the Israelite religious mind saw and dwelt upon, as well as upon man's share in the dread process of moral decay.

We also do well to take heed to this aspect of the truth. When we do, we have solved the Scriptural difficulty regarding the Divine hardening of man's heart. It is simply the ancient formula for what every mind that is ethically trained recognises in the world to-day. Those who recognise themselves as children of God, and acknowledge the obligations of His law, are dealt with in the way of discipline with infinite love and patience. Those who definitely set themselves against the moral order of the world which God has established are broken in pieces and destroyed. Between these two classes there are the morally undetermined, who ultimately turn either to the right hand or to the left. The process by which these pass on to be numbered among the rebellious is pictured in Scripture with extraordinary moral insight. The only difference from a present-day description of it is, that here God is kept constantly present to the mind as the chief factor in the development of the soul. To-day, even those who believe in God are apt to forget Him in tracing His laws of action. But that is an error of the first magnitude. It darkens the hope of man; for without a sure promise of Divine help there is no certainty of moral victory either for the race or the individual. It narrows our view of the awful sweep of sin; for unless we see that sin affects even the Ruler of the universe, and defies His unchanging law, its results are limited to the evil that we do our fellowmen, which, as we see it, is of little importance. Further, it degrades moral law to a mere arbitrary dictum of power, or to an opinion founded upon man's purblind experience. The acknowledgment of God, on the contrary, makes morality the very essence of the Divine nature, and the unchangeable rule for the life of man.

CHAPTER IV

THE DECALOGUE—ITS FORM

DEUT. v. 1-21.

AS the fourth chapter belongs to the speech which concludes the legislative portion of Deuteronomy both in contents and language (see Chapter XXIII.), we shall pass on now to the fifth chapter, which begins with a recital of the Decalogue. As has already been pointed out, the main trunk of the Book of Deuteronomy is a repetition and expansion of the Law of the Covenant contained in Exod. xx.—xxiii.[1] Now, both in Exodus and Deuteronomy, before the more general and detailed legislation, we have the Decalogue, or the Ten Words, as it is called, in substantially the same form; and the question immediately arises as to the age at which this beautifully systematised and organised code of fundamental laws came into existence. Whatever its origin, it is an exceedingly remarkable document. It touches the fundamental principles of religious and moral life with so sure a hand that at this hour, for even the most civilised nations, it sums up the moral code, and that so effectively that no change or extension of it has ever been proposed. That being its character, it becomes a question of exceeding interest to decide whether it can justly be referred to so early a time as the days of Moses. In both the passages where it occurs it is represented as

[1] See this brought out in detail in Robertson Smith, *Old Testament in Jewish Church*, p. 431.

having been given to the people at Horeb by Yahweh Himself, and it is made the earliest and most fundamental part of the covenant between Him and Israel. It would accordingly seem as if a claim were made for it as a specially early and specially sacred law. Now, much as critics have denied, there have been found very few who deny that in the main some such law as this must have been given to Israel in Moses' day. Even Kuenen admits as much as that in his *History of the Religion of Israel.* The only commandment of the ten he has difficulty in accepting is the second, which forbids the making of any graven image for worship. That, he thinks, cannot have been in the original Decalogue, not because of any peculiarity of language, or because of any incoherency in composition, but simply because he cannot believe that at that early day the religion of Yahweh could have been so spiritual as to demand the prohibition of images. But his reasons are extremely inadequate; more especially as he admits that the Ark was the Mosaic Sanctuary, and that in it there was no image, as there was none in the Temple at Jerusalem. That Yahweh was worshipped under the form of a calf at Horeb, and afterwards in Northern Israel at Bethel and elsewhere, proves nothing. A law does not forthwith extinguish that against which it is directed, for idolatry continued even after Deuteronomy was accepted as the law. Moreover, if, as Kuenen thinks, calf-worship had existed in Israel before Moses, it was not unnatural that it took centuries before the higher view superseded the lower. Even by Christianity the ancient superstitions and religious practices of heathenism were not thoroughly overcome for centuries. Indeed in many places they have not yet been entirely suppressed. Nor does Wellhausen[1] make a better case for a late Decalogue. His hesitation about it is most remarkable,

[1] Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, p. 439.

and the reasons he gives for tending to think it may be late are singularly unsatisfactory. His first reason is that "according to Exodus xxxiv. the commandments which stood upon the two tables were quite different." He relies on the words in ver. 28 of that chapter—"And he (Moses) was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten words"—taking them to imply that the immediately preceding commandments, which are of the same ritual character with those which follow the Decalogue in Exodus xx., are here called the ten words. But it is not necessary to take the passage so. According to ver. 1 it was Yahweh who was to write the words on the tables, and we cannot suppose that so flagrant a contradiction should occur in a single chapter as that here it should be said that Moses wrote the tables. Yahweh, who is mentioned in the previous verse, must therefore be the subject of *wayyikhtobh* (ver. 28), and the ten words consequently are different from the words (up to ver. 27) which Yahweh commanded Moses to write, somewhere, but not on the tables. Besides, every one who attempts to make ten words of the commands before ver. 27 brings out a different result, and that of itself, as Dillmann says, is sufficient to show that the second Decalogue in chapter xxxiv. is entirely fanciful. Wellhausen's second reason is this: "The prohibition of images was quite unknown during the other period: Moses himself is said to have made a brazen serpent, which down to Hezekiah's time continued to be worshipped as an image of Jehovah." But the Decalogue does not prohibit the making of every image; it prohibits the making of images for worship. Therefore Moses might quite well have made a figure of a serpent, even though he wrote the Decalogue, if it was not meant for worship. But there

is nothing said to lead us to believe that the serpent was regarded as an image of Yahweh. Indeed the very contrary is asserted; and if Israel in later times made a bad use of this ancient relic of a great deliverance, Moses can hardly be held responsible for that. In the third place, Wellhausen says: "The essentially and necessarily national character of the older phases of the religion of Yahweh completely disappears in the quite universal code of morals which is given in the Decalogue as the fundamental law of Israel; but the entire series of religious personalities throughout the period of the Judges and Kings—from Deborah, who praised Jael's treacherous act of murder, to David, who treated his prisoners of war with the utmost cruelty—make it very difficult to believe that the religion of Israel was from the outset one of a specifically moral character." Surely this is very feeble criticism. On the same grounds we might declare, because of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, or on account of Napoleon's reported poisoning of his own wounded at Acre, that Christianity was not a religion of a "specifically moral character" at this present moment. Surely the facts that people never live at the level of their ideals, and that the lifting of a nation's life is a process which is as slow as the raising of the level of the delta of the Nile, should be too familiar to permit any one to be misled by difficulties of this kind. Nor is his last ground in any degree more convincing. "It is extremely doubtful," he says, "whether the actual monotheism which is undoubtedly presupposed in the universal moral precepts of the Decalogue could have formed the foundation of a national religion. It was first developed out of the national religion at the downfall of the nation." The obvious reply is that this is a *petitio principii*. The whole debate in regard to this question is whether Moses was a monotheist, or at least the founder of a religion which was

implicitly monotheistic from the beginning; and the date of the Decalogue is interesting mainly because of the light it would throw upon that question. To decide this date therefore by the assertion that, being monotheistic, the Decalogue cannot be Mosaic, is to assume the very thing in dispute. Wellhausen himself, elsewhere (p. 434), seems to favour the opposite view. In speaking of what Moses did for Israel he says that through "the Torah," in the sense of decisions given by lot from the Ark, "he gave a definite positive expression to their sense of nationality and their idea of God. Yahweh was not merely the God of Israel; as such He was the God at once of Law and of Justice, the basis, the informing principle, and the implied postulate of their national consciousness"; and again (p. 438), "As God of the nation Yahweh became the God of Justice and of Right; as God of Justice and Right, He came to be thought of as the highest, and at last as the only power in heaven and earth." In the Mosaic conception of God, therefore, Wellhausen himself being witness, there lay implicitly, perhaps even explicitly, the conception of Yahweh as "the only power in heaven and earth." In that case, is it reasonable to put the Decalogue late, because being moral it is universal, and so implies monotheism?

But there is still other, and perhaps stronger evidence, that the universality of the Decalogue is no indication of a late date. On the contrary it would seem, from Professor Muirhead's account of the Roman *fas*, that universality in legal precept may be a mark of very primitive laws. Speaking of Rome in its earliest stages of growth, when the circumstances of the people in very many respects resembled those of the Hebrews in Mosaic times,[1] he says: "We look in vain for, and it would be

[1] *Ency. Brit.*, vol. xx . 670.

absurd to expect, any definite system of law in those early times. What passed for it was a composite of *fas*, *jus*, and *boni mores*, whose several limits and characteristics it is extremely difficult to define." He then proceeds to describe *fas*: "By *fas* was understood the will of the gods, the laws given by Heaven for men on earth, much of it regulative of ceremonial, but a by no means insignificant part embodying rules of conduct. It appears to have had a wider range than *jus*. There were few of its commands, prohibitions, or precepts that were addressed to men as citizens of any particular state; *all mankind came within its scope*. It forbade that a war should be undertaken without the prescribed fetial ceremonial, and required that faith should be kept with even an enemy—when a promise had been made to him under sanction of an oath. It enjoined hospitality to foreigners, because the stranger guest was presumed, equally with his entertainer, to be an object of solicitude to a higher power. It punished murder, for it was the taking of a God-given life; the sale of a wife by her husband, for she had become his partner in all things human and Divine; the lifting of a hand against a parent, for it was subversive of the first bond of society and religion, the reverence due by a child to those to whom he owed his existence; incestuous connections, for they defiled the altar; the false oath, and the broken vow, for they were an insult to the divinities invoked," etc. In fact, the Roman *fas* had much the same character as the Decalogue and the legislation of the first code (Exod. xx.—xxiii.). Consequently those who have thought that all early legislation must be concrete, narrow, particularistic, bounded at widest by the direct needs of the men making up the clan, tribe, or petty nationality, are wrong. The early history of law shows that, along with that, there is also a demand for some expression of the laws of life seen

from the point of view of man's relation to God. That fact greatly strengthens the case for the early date of the Decalogue. For practically it is the Hebrew *fas*. If it has a higher tone and a wider sweep, if it provides a framework into which human duty can, even now, without undue stretching of it, be securely fitted, that is only what we should expect, if God was working in the history and development of this nation as nowhere else in the world. In short, the history of primitive Roman law shows that, without inspiration, a feeble wavering step would have been taken to the development of a code of moral duty, within the scope of which all mankind should come. With inspiration, surely this effort would also be made, and made with a success not elsewhere attained.

In none of the reasons which have been advanced, therefore, is there anything to set against the Biblical statement that the ten words were older and more sacred than any other portion of the Israelite legislation, and that they were Mosaic in origin. The universal hesitation shown by the greater among the most advanced critics in definitely removing the Decalogue from the foundations of Israel's history, although its presence there is so great an embarrassment to them, lets us see how strong the case for the Mosaic origin is, and assures us that the evidence is all in favour of this view.

But if it be Mosaic, at first sight the conclusion would seem to be that the form of the Decalogue given in Exodus is the more ancient, and that the text in Deuteronomy is a later and somewhat extended version of that. Closer examination, however, tends to suggest that the original ten words, in their Mosaic form, differed from any of the texts we have, and that of these the Exodus text in its present form is later than that in Deuteronomy. The great difference in length between the two halves of the Decalogue suggests the probability that originally all the

commandments were short, and much the same in style and character as the last half, "Thou shalt not steal," and so on. Further, when the reasons and inducements given for the observance of the longer commands are set aside, just such short commands are left to us as we find in the second table. Lastly, differences between the versions in Exodus and Deuteronomy occur in almost every case in those parts of the text which may be regarded as appendices. In fact there are only two variations in the proper text of the commands. In the fourth, we have in Exodus "Remember the Sabbath day," while in Deuteronomy we have "Observe the Sabbath day"; but the meaning is the same in both cases. In the tenth, in Exodus the command is "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house"; and the "house" is explained by the succeeding clause, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant," etc., to mean "household" in its widest sense. In Deuteronomy the old meaning of "house" as household and goods has fallen out of use, and the component parts of the neighbour's household possessions are named, beginning with his wife. Then follows the "house" in its narrow meaning, as the mere dwelling, grouped along with the slaves and cattle, and with *tithawweh* substituted in Hebrew for *tachmodh*. Fundamentally therefore the two recensions are the same. Even in the reasons and explanations there is only one really important variation. In Exod. xx. 11 the reason for the observance of the fourth commandment is stated thus: "For in six days Yahweh made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; therefore Yahweh blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it." In Deuteronomy, on the other hand, that reason is omitted, and in its place we find this: "And thou shalt remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and Yahweh thy God brought thee out thence by

a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm ; therefore Yahweh thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath." Now if the reference to the creation had formed part of the original text of the Decalogue in the days of the author of Deuteronomy, if he had that before him as actually spoken by Yahweh, it is difficult to believe that he would have left it out and substituted another reason in its stead. He would have no object in doing so, for he could have added his own reason after that given in Exodus, had he so desired It is likely, therefore, that in the original text no reason appeared; that Deuteronomy first added a reason ; while ver. 11 in Exod. xx. was probably inserted there from a combination of Exod. xxxi. 17 *b* and Gen. ii. 2 *b*,—"For in six days Yahweh made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed" ; "and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made." Both these texts belong to P and differ in style altogether from JE, with whose language all the rest of the setting of the Decalogue corresponds. On these suppositions Exod. xx. 11 would necessarily be the latest part of the two texts. Originally, therefore, the Mosaic commands probably ran thus :—

"I am Yahweh thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

"I. Thou shalt not have any other gods before Me.

"II. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.

"III. Thou shalt not take the name of Yahweh thy God in vain.

"IV. Remember (*or* Keep) the day of rest to sanctify it.

"V. Honour thy father and thy mother.

"VI. Thou shalt not kill.

"VII. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

"VIII. Thou shalt not steal.

"IX. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

"X. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house."

In that shape they contain everything that is fundamentally important, and exhibit the foundations of the Mosaic religion and polity in an entirely satisfactory and credible form.

But, before passing on to consider the substance of the Decalogue, it will be worth our while to consider what the full significance of these differing recensions of the Decalogue is. In both places the words are quoted directly as having been spoken by Yahweh to the people, and they are introduced by the quoting word "saying." Now if we do not wish to square what we read with any theory, the slight divergences between the two recensions need not trouble us, for we have the substance of what was said, and in the main the very words, and that is really all we need to be assured of. But if, on the contrary, we are going to insist that, this being part of an inspired book, every word must be pressed with the accuracy of a masoretic scribe, then we are brought into inextricable difficulties. It cannot be true that at Horeb Yahweh said two different things on this special occasion. One or both of these accounts must be inaccurate, in the pedantic sense of accuracy, and yet both have the same claim to be inspired. In fact both *are* inspired; it is the theory of inspiration which demands for revelation this kind of accuracy that must go to the wall.

It will be seen that this instance is very instructive as to the method of the ancient Hebrews in dealing with legislation which was firmly held to be Mosaic, or even directly Divine. If we are right in holding that originally the ten words were, as we have supposed, limited to definite short commands, this example teaches us that where there could be no question of deceit, or even an

object for deceiving, additions calculated to meet the needs and defects of the particular period at which the laws are written down, are inserted without any hint that they did not form part of the original document. If this has been done, even to the extent we have seen reason to infer, in a small, carefully ordered, and specially ancient and sacred code, how much more freely may we expect the same thing to have been done in the looser and more fluid regulations of the large political and ceremonial codes, which on any supposition were posterior, and much less fundamental and sacred. That there is for *us* something disappointing, and even slightly questionable, in such action is really nothing to the purpose. We have to learn from the actual facts of revelation how revelation may be, or perhaps even must be, conveyed; and we cannot too soon learn the lesson that to a singular degree, and in many other directions than their notions of accuracy, the ancient mind differs from the modern mind, and that at any period there is a great gulf to be crossed before a Western mind can get into any intimate and sure *rapport* with an Eastern mind.

One other thing is noteworthy. Wellhausen has already been quoted as to the quite universal and moral character of the Decalogue; and his view, that a code so free from merely local and ceremonial provisions can hardly be Mosaic, has been discussed. But, while rejecting his conclusion, we must adhere to his premisses. By emphasising the universal nature of the ten commandments, and by showing that they preceded the ceremonial law by many centuries, the critical school have cut away the ground from under the semi-antinomian views once so prevalent, and always so popular, with those who call themselves advanced thinkers. It is now no longer possible to maintain that the Decalogue was part of a purely Jewish law, binding only upon Jews and passing

away at the advent of Christianity as the ceremonial law did. Of course this view was never really taken seriously in reference to murder or theft; but it has always been a strong point with those who have wished to secularise the Sunday. Now if the advanced critical position be in any degree true, then the ten commandments stand quite separate from the ceremonial law, have nothing in common with it, and are handed down to us in a document written before the conception even of a binding ceremonial law had dawned upon the mind of any man in Israel. Nor is there anything ceremonial or Jewish in the command, Remember *or* Observe the rest-day to keep it holy. In the reasons given in Exodus and Deuteronomy we have the two principles which make this a moral and universal command—the necessity for rest, and the necessity of an opportunity to cultivate the spiritual nature. Nothing indeed is said about worship; but it lies in the nature of the case that if secular work was rigorously forbidden, mere slothful abstinence from activity cannot have been all that was meant. Worship, and instruction in the things of the higher life, must certainly have been practised in such a nation as Israel on such a day; and we may therefore say that they were intended by this commandment. Understood in that way, the fourth commandment shows a delicate perception of the conditions of the higher life, which surpasses even the prohibition of covetousness in the tenth. In the words of a working man who was advocating its observance, "It gives God a chance"; that is, it gives man the leisure to attend to God. But the moral point of view which it implies is so high, and so difficult of attainment, that it is only now that the nations of Europe are awaking to the inestimable moral benefits of the Sabbath they have despised. Because of this difficulty too, many who think themselves to be leaders in the path of improvement, and

are esteemed by others to be so, are never weary of trying to weaken the moral consciousness of the people, until they can steal this benefit away, on the ground that Sabbath-keeping is a mere ceremonial observance. So far from being that, it is a moral duty of the highest type; and the danger in which it seems at times to stand is due mainly to the fact that to appreciate it needs a far more trained and sincere conscience than most of us can bring to the consideration of it.

CHAPTER V

THE DECALOGUE—ITS SUBSTANCE

THAT the Decalogue in any of its forms must have been the work of one mind, and that a very great and powerful mind, will be evident on the most cursory inspection. We have not here, as we have in other parts of Scripture, fragments of legislation supplementary to a large body of customary law, fragments which, because of their intrinsic importance or the necessities of a particular time, have been written down. We have here an extraordinarily successful attempt to bring within a definite small compass the fundamental laws of social and individual life. The wonder of it does not lie in the individual precepts. All of them, or almost all of them, can be paralleled in the legislation of other peoples, as indeed could not fail to be the case if the *fundamental* laws of society and of individual conduct were aimed at. These must be obeyed, more or less, in every society that survives. It is the wisdom with which the selection has been made; it is the sureness of hand which has picked out just those things which were central, and has laid aside as irrelevant everything local, temporary, and purely ceremonial; it is the relation in which the whole is placed to God,—these give this small code its distinction. In these respects it is like the Lord's Prayer. It is vain for men to point out this petition of that unique prayer as occurring here, that other as occurring there, and a third as found in yet another place. Even if every single

petition contained in it could be unearthed somewhere, it would still remain as unique as ever; for where can you find a prayer which, like it, groups the fundamental cries of humanity to God in such short space and with so sure a touch, and brings them all into such deep connection with the Fatherhood of God? In both cases, in the prayer and in the Decalogue alike, we must recognise that the grouping is the work of one mind; and in both we must recognise also that, whatever were the natural and human powers of the mind that wrought the code and prayer respectively, the main element in the success that has attended their work is the extraordinary degree in which they were illumined by the Divine Spirit. But where, between the time of Moses and the time when Deuteronomy first laid hold upon the life of the nation, are we to look for a legislator of this pre-eminence? So far as we know the history, there is no name that would occur to us. So far as can be seen, Moses alone has been marked out for us in the history of his people as equal to, and likely to undertake, such a task. Everything, therefore, concurs to the conclusion that in the Decalogue we have the first, the most sacred, and the fundamental law in Israel. Here Moses spoke for God; and whatever additions to his original ten words later times may have made, they have not obscured or overlaid what must be ascribed to him. He may not have been the author of much that bears his name, for unquestionably there were developments later than his time which were called Mosaic because they were a continuation and adaptation of his work; but we are justified in believing that here we have the first law he gave to Israel; and in it we should be able to see the really germinal principles of the religion he taught.

Now, manifestly, a religion which spoke its first word in the ten commandments, even in their simplest form,

must have been in its very heart and core moral. It must always have been a heresy therefore, a denial of the fundamental Mosaic conception, to place ritual observance *per se* above moral and religious conduct, as a means of approach to Yahweh. On any reading of the commandments only the third and fourth (two out of ten) refer to matters of mere worship; and even these may more correctly be taken to refer primarily to the moral aspects of the cultus. All the rest deal with fundamental relations to God and man. Consequently the prophets who, after the manner of Amos and Hosea, denounce the prevailing belief that Yahweh's help could be secured for Israel, whatever its moral state, by offerings and sacrifices, were not teaching a new doctrine, first discovered by themselves. They were simply reasserting the fundamental principles of the Mosaic religion. Reverence and righteousness—these from the first were the twin pillars upon which it rested. Before ever the ceremonial law, even in its most rudimentary form, had been given, these were emphasised in the strongest way as the requirements of Yahweh; and the people whom the prophets reproved, instead of being the representatives of the ancient Yahwistic faith, had rejected it. Whether the popular view was a falling away from a truer view which had once been popular, or whether it represented a heathen tendency which remained in Israel from pre-Mosaic times and had not even in the days of Amos been overcome, it seems undeniable that it was entirely contrary to the fundamental principles of Yahwism as given by Moses. Even by the latest narrators, those who brought our Pentateuch into its present shape, and who were, it is supposed, completely under the influence of ceremonial Judaism, the primarily moral character of Yahweh's religion was acknowledged by the place they gave to the ten commandments. They alone

are handed down as spoken by Yahweh Himself, and as having preceded all other commands; and the terrors of Sinai, the thunder and the earthquake, are made more intimately the accompaniments of this law than of any other. Unquestionably the mind of Israel always was, that here, and not in the ceremonial law, was the centre of gravity of Yahwism. In the view of that fact it is somewhat hard to understand how so many writers of our times, who admit the Decalogue to have been Mosaic, or at any rate pre-prophetic, yet deny the prevailingly moral character of the early religion of Israel. When this law was once promulgated, the old naturalism in which Israel, like other ancient races, had been entangled was repudiated, and the relation between Yahweh and His people was declared to be one which rested upon moral conduct in the widest sense of that term. And the ground of this fact is plainly declared here to be the character of Yahweh: "I am the Lord thy God, that brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." He was their deliverer, He had a right to command them, and His commands revealed His nature to His people.

The first four commandments show that Yahweh was already conceived as a spiritual being, removed by a whole heaven from the gods of the Canaanite nations by whom Israel was surrounded. These were mere representatives of the powers of nature. As such they were regarded as existing in pairs, each god having his female counterpart; and their acts had all the indifference to moral considerations which nature in its processes shows. They dwelt in mountain tops, in trees, in rude stones, or in obelisks, and they were worshipped by rites so sanguinary and licentious that Canaanite worship bore everywhere a darker stain than even nature-worship elsewhere had disclosed. In contrast to all this the Yahweh

of the Decalogue is "alone," in solitary and unapproachable separation. Amid all the unbridled speculation that has been let loose on this subject, no one, I think, has ever ventured to join with Him any name of a goddess, and He sternly repudiates the worship of any other god besides Him. Now, though there is nothing said of monotheism here, *i.e.* of the doctrine that no god but one exists, yet, in contrast to the hospitality which distinguished and distinguishes nature-worship in all its forms, Yahweh here claims from His people worship of the most exclusive kind. Besides Him they were to have no object of worship. He, in His unapproachable separateness, had alone a claim upon their reverence. Further, in contrast to the gods who dwelt in trees and stones and pillars, and who could be represented by symbols of that kind, Yahweh sternly forbade the making of any image to represent Him. Thereby He declared Himself spiritual, in so far as He claimed that no visible thing could adequately represent Him. In contrast to the ethnic religions in general, even that of Zarathushtra, the noblest of all, where only the natural element of fire was taken to be the god or his symbol, this fundamental command asserts the supersensuous nature of the Deity, thereby rising at one step clear above all naturalism.

So great is the step indeed, that Kuenen and others, who cannot escape the evidence for the antiquity of the other commandments, insist that this at least cannot be pre-prophetic, since we have such numerous proofs of the worship of Yahweh by images, down at least to the time of Josiah's reform. But, by all but Stade, it is admitted that there was at Shiloh under Eli, and at Jerusalem under David and Solomon, no visible representation of Deity. Now the same writers who tell us this everywhere represent the worship of Yahweh by images as existing among the people. According to their view, the nation

had a continual and hereditary tendency to slip into image-worship, or to maintain it as pre-Mosaic custom. And it is quite certain that up even to the Captivity, and after, when, according to even the very boldest negative view, this command had been long known, image-worship, not only of Yahweh, but also of false gods and of the host of heaven, was largely prevalent. Only the Captivity, with its hardships and trials, brought Israel to see that image-worship was incompatible with any true belief in Yahweh. Undeniably, therefore, the existence of an authoritative prohibition does not necessarily produce obedience; and the Biblical view that the Decalogue is Israel's earliest law proves to be the more reasonable, as well as the better authenticated of the two. If, after the command beyond all doubt existed in Israel, it needed the calamities of Israel's last days, and the hardships and griefs of the Exile, to get it completely observed, and if in Jerusalem and at Shiloh in the pre-prophetic time Yahweh was worshipped without images, there can hardly be a doubt that this command must have existed in the earliest period. For no religion is to be judged by the actual practice of the multitude. The true criterion is its highest point; and the imageless worship of Jerusalem is much more difficult to understand if the second commandment was not acknowledged previously in Israel, than it would be if the Decalogue, essentially as we now have it, was acknowledged in the days before the kingship at least.[1]

The arguments advanced by Kuenen and Wellhausen for a contrary view, beyond those we have just been considering, rest on an undue extension of the prohibition to make any likeness of anything. They adduce the brazen serpent of Moses, and the Cherubim, and the brazen bulls

[1] Granting that the commandment did not exist, one asks, *What* was it in Yahwism which determined the Jerusalem Sanctuary to be imageless?

that bore the brazen laver in the court of the Temple at Jerusalem, and the ornaments of that building, as a proof that even in Jerusalem this commandment cannot have been known. But, as we have seen, the original command prohibited only the making of a *pesel*, *i.e.* of an image for worship. The making of likenesses of men and animals for mere purposes of art and adornment was never included; and the whole objection falls to the ground unless it be asserted that the bulls under the basin were actually worshipped by those who came into the Temple!

The supersensuous nature of Yahweh must, therefore, be taken to be a fundamental part of the Mosaic religion. But besides being solitary and supersensuous, Yahweh was declared by Moses, perhaps by His very name, to be not only mighty, but helpful. The preface to the whole series of commandments is, "I am Yahweh thy God, who brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt." Now of all the derivations of Yahweh, that which most nearly commands universal acceptance is its derivation from *hayah*, to be. And the probabilities are all in favour of the view that it does not imply mere timeless existence, as the translation of the explanation in Exodus [1] has led many to believe. That is a purely philosophical idea entirely outside of morality, and it can hardly be that the introduction to this moral code, which announces the author of it, should contain no moral reference. If the name be from Qal, and be connected with *ehyeh*, then it means, as Dillmann says (*Exodus and Leviticus*, p. 35), that He will be what He has been, and the name involves a reference to all that the God of Israel has been in the past. Such He will be in the future, for He is what He is, without variableness or shadow of turning. If, on the other hand, it be from Hiphil, it will mean "He who causes to be," the creator. In either case there is a clear rise above the ordinary Semitic names for

[1] iii. 14.

God, Baal, Molech, Milkom, which all express mere lordship. No doubt Yahweh was also called Baal, or Lord, just as we find Him in the Psalms addressed as "my King and my God"; but the specially Mosaic name, the personal name of the God of Israel, does undoubtedly imply quite another quality in God. It is the Helper who has revealed Himself to Israel who here speaks. Hence the addition, "who brought thee out of the land of Egypt." It is as a Saviour that Yahweh addresses His people. By His very name He lifts all the commands He gives out of the region of mere might, or the still lower region of gratification at offerings and precious things bestowed, into the region of gratitude and love.

Further, by issuing this code under the name of Yahweh Moses claimed for Him a moral character. Whether the Hebrew word for holy, *qādhōsh*, implied more in those days than mere separateness, may be doubted; but it is impossible that the idea which we now connect with the word "holy" should not have been held to be congruous to, and expressive of, the nature of Yahweh. Here morality in its initial and fundamental stages is set forth as an expression of His will. And similarly, righteousness must also be an attribute of His, for justice between man and man is made to be His demand upon men. He Himself, therefore, must be faithful as well as holy, and His emancipation from the clinging chain of mere naturalism was thereby completed. The Yahweh of the Decalogue is therefore absolutely alone. He is supersensuous. He is the Helper and Saviour, and He is holy and true. These are His fundamental qualities. Such qualities may be supposed to be present only in their elements, even to the mind of Moses himself: yet the fundamental germinal point was there: and all that has grown out of it may be justly put to the credit of this first revelation.

A moment's thought will show how the teaching that

Yahweh alone was to be worshipped broke away from the main stream of Semitic belief, and prepared the way for the ultimate prevalence of the belief that God was one. That He was supersensuous, so that He could not rightly or adequately be represented by any likeness of anything in heaven or earth or sea, left no possible outlet for thought about Him, save in the direction that He was a Spirit. In essence consequently the spirituality of God was thereby secured. Still more important perhaps was the conception of Yahweh as the Helper and Deliverer, the Saviour of His people; for this at once suggested the thought that the true bond between God and man was not mere necessity, nor mere dependence upon resistless power, but love—love to a Divine Helper who revealed Himself in gracious acts and providences, and who longed after and cared for His people with a perfectly undeserved affection. Lastly, His holiness and faithfulness, His righteousness in fact, held implicit in it His supremacy and universality. As Wellhausen has said, "As God of justice and right, Yahweh came to be thought of as the highest, and at last as the only power in heaven and earth." Whether that last stage was present to the mind of Moses, or of any who received the commandments in the first place, is of merely secondary importance. At the very least, the way which must necessarily lead to that stage was opened here, and the mind of man entered upon the path to a pure monotheism, a monotheism which separated God from the world, and referred to His will all that happened in the world of created things. God is One, God is a Spirit, God is Love, and God rules over all—these are the attributes of Yahweh as the Decalogue sets them forth; and in principle the whole higher life of humanity was secured by the great synthesis.

Like all beginnings, this was an achievement of the

highest kind. Nowhere but in the soul of one Divinely enlightened man could such a revelation have made itself known; and the solitude of a lonely shepherd's life, following upon the stir and training of a high place in the cultured society of Egypt, gave precisely the kind of environment which would prepare the soul to hear the voice by which God spoke. For we are not to suppose that this revelation came to Moses without any effort or preparation on his part. God does not reveal His highest to the slothful or the debased. Even when He speaks from Sinai in thunder and in flame, it is only the man who has been exercising himself in these great matters who can understand and remember. All the people had been terrified by the Divine Presence, but they forgot the law immediately and fell back into idolatry. It was Moses who retained it and brought it back to them again. His personality was the organ of the Divine will; and in this law which he promulgated Moses laid the foundation of all that now forms the most cherished heritage of men. The central thing in religion is the character of God. Contrary to the prevailing feeling, which makes many say that they know nothing of God, but are sure of their duty to man, history teaches that, in the end, man's thought of God is the decisive thing. Everything else shapes itself according to that; and by taking the first great steps, which broke through the limits of mere naturalism, Moses laid the foundation of all that was to come. There was here the promise and the potency of all higher life: love and holiness had their way prepared, so that they should one day become supreme in man's conception of the highest life: the confused halting between the material and the spiritual, which can be traced in the very highest conceptions of merely natural religions, was in principle done away. And what was here gained was never lost again. Even though the multitude never really grasped

all that Moses had proclaimed Yahweh to be; and though it should be proved, which is as yet by no means the case, that even David thought of Him as limited in power and claims by the extent of the land which Israel inhabited; and though, as a matter of fact, the full-orbed universality which the ten commandments implicitly held in them was not attained under the old covenant at all; yet these ten words remained always an incitement to higher thoughts. No advance made in religion or morals by the chosen people ever superseded them. Even when Christ came, He came not to destroy but to fulfil. The highest reach of even His thoughts as regards God could be brought easily and naturally under the terms of this fundamental revelation to Israel.

The remaining commands, those which deal with the relations of men to each other, are naturally introduced by the fifth commandment, which, while it deals with human relations, deals with those which most nearly resemble the relations between God and man. Reverence for God, the deliverer and forgiver of men, is the sum of the commandments which precede; and here we have inculcated reverence for those who are, under God, the source of life, upon whose love and care all, at their entrance into life, are so absolutely dependent. Love is not commanded; because in such relations it is natural, and moreover it cannot be produced at will. But reverence is; and from the place of the command, manifestly what is required is something of that same awful respect which is due to Yahweh Himself. The power which parents had over their children in Israel was extensive, though much less so than that possessed, for example, by Roman parents. A father could sell his daughters to be espoused as subordinate wives;[1] he could disallow any vows a

[1] Exod. xxi. 7.

daughter might wish to take upon her;[1] and both parents could bring an incorrigibly rebellious son to the elders of the city[2] and have him stoned publicly to death. But, according to Moses, the main restraining forces in the home should be love and reverence, guarded only by the solemn sanction of death to the openly irreverent, just as reverence for Yahweh was guarded.

There was here nothing of the sordid view, repudiated so energetically by Jewish scholars like Kalisch,[3] that we ought "to weigh and measure filial affection after the degree of enjoyed benefits." No; to this law "the relation between parents and children is holy, religious, godly, not of a purely human character"; and it is a mere profanation to regard it as we in modern times too often do. In our mad pursuit after complete individual liberty we have fallen back into a moral region which it was the almost universal merit of the ancient civilisations to have left behind them. It is true, certainly, that there were reasons for this advance then which we could not now recognise without falling back from our own attainments in other directions; but it was the saving salt of the ancient civilisations that the parents in a household were surrounded with an atmosphere of reverence, which made transgressions against them as rare as they were considered horrible. The modern freedom may in favourable circumstances produce more intimate and sympathetic intercourse between parents and children; but in the average household it has lowered the whole tone of family life; and it threatens sooner or later, if the ancient feeling cannot be restored, to destroy the family, the very keystone of our religion and civilisation. This commandment

[1] Numb. xxx. 6.

[2] Deut. xxi. 8.

[3] Kalisch, *Exodus*, p. 364:—yet taught in all Victorian State schools under the vicious system at present admitted.

is not conditioned on the question whether parents have been more or less successful in giving their children what they desire, or whether they have been wise and unselfish in their dealing with their children. As parents they have a claim upon their respect, their tenderness, their observance, which can be neglected only at the children's peril. Even the average parent gives quite endless thought and care to his children, and almost unconsciously falls into the habit of living for them. That brings with it for the children an indelible obligation; and along with the new and wiser freedom which is permitted in the modern home, this reverence should grow, just as the love and reverence for God on the part of those who have been made the free children of God through Christ ought far to exceed that to which the best of the Old Testament saints could attain.

Want of reverence for parents is, in the Decalogue, made almost one with want of reverence toward God, and, in the case of this human duty alone, there is a promise annexed to its observance. The duty runs so deep into the very core of human life, that its fulfilment brings wholesomeness to the moral nature; this health spreads into the merely physical constitution, and long life becomes the reward. But apart from the quietude of heart and the power of self-restraint which so great a duty rightly fulfilled brings with it, we must also suppose that in a special manner the blessing of God does rest upon dutiful children. Even in the modern world, amid all its complexity, and though in numberless instances it may seem to have been falsified, this promise verifies itself on the large scale. In the less complex life of early Israel we may well believe that its verification was even more strikingly seen. In both ancient and modern times, moreover, the human conscience has leaped up to justify the belief that of all the sins committed without the body

this is the most heinous, and that there does rest upon it in a peculiar manner the wrath of Almighty God. It is a blasphemy against love in its earliest manifestations to the soul, and only by answering love with love and reverence can there be any fulfilling of the law.

After the fifth, the commandments deal with the purely human relations; but in coming down from the duties which men owe to God, this law escapes the sordidness which seems to creep over the laws of other nations, when they have to deal with the rights and duties of men. The human rights are taken up rather into their relation to God, and cease to be mere matters of bargain and arrangement. They are viewed entirely from the religious and moral standpoint. For example, the destruction of human life, which in most cases was in ancient times dealt with by private law, and was punished by fines or money payments, is here regarded solely as a sin, an act forbidden by God. The will of a holy God is the source of these prohibitions, however much the idea of property may extend in them beyond the limits which to us now seem fitting. They begin with the protection of a man's life, the highest of his possessions. Next, they prohibit any injury to him through his wife, who next to his life is most dear to him. Then property in our modern sense is protected; and lastly, rising out of the merely physical region, the ninth commandment prohibits any attack upon a man's civil standing or honour by false witness concerning him in the courts of justice. To that crime Easterns are prone to a degree which Westerns, whom Rome has trained to reverence for law, can hardly realise. In India, at this hour, false witnesses can be purchased in the open market at a trifling price; and under native government the whole forces of civil justice become instruments of the most remediless and exasperating tyranny. So long as the law has not spoken its last word

against the innocent, there is hope of remedy; justice may at last assert itself. But when, either by corrupt witnesses or by a corrupt judge, the law itself inflicts the wrong, then redress is impossible, and we have the oppression which drives a wise man mad. Both murder and robbery, moreover, may be perpetrated by false swearing; and the trust, the confidence that social life demands, is utterly destroyed by it.

But it is in the tenth commandment especially that this code soars most completely away beyond others. In four short words the whole region of neighbourly duty, so far as acts are concerned, has been covered, and with that other codes have been content. But the laws of Yahweh must cover more than that. Out of the heart proceed all these acts which have been forbidden, and Yahweh takes knowledge of its thoughts and intents. The covetous desire, the grasping after that which we cannot lawfully have, that, too, is absolutely forbidden. It has been pointed out that the first commandment also deals with the thoughts. "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me," separated from the prohibition of idol-worship, can refer only to the inward adoration or submission of the heart. And in this last commandment also it is the evil desire, the lust which "bringeth forth sin," which is condemned. In its beginning and ending, therefore, this code transcends the limits ordinarily fixed for law; it leads the mind to a view of the depth and breadth of the evil that has to be coped with, which the other precepts, taken by themselves and understood in their merely literal sense, would scarcely suggest.

This fact should guard us against the common fallacy that Moses and the people of his day could not have understood these commandments in any sense except the barely literal one. In the first and tenth commandments there is involved the whole teaching of our Lord that he

that hateth his brother is a murderer. The evil thought that first stirs the evil desire is here placed on the same interdicted level as the evil deed; and though until our Lord had spoken none had seen all that was implied, yet here too He was only fulfilling, bringing to perfection, that which the law as given by Moses had first outlined. With this in view, it seems difficult to justify that interpretation of the commandments which refuses all depth of meaning to them. The initial and final references to the inner thoughts of men, the delicate moral perception which puts so unerring a finger on the sources of sin, show that such literalism is out of place. No interpretation can do this law justice which treats it superficially; and instead of feeling safest when we find least in these commandments, we should welcome from them all the correction and reproof which a reasonable exegesis will sustain.

Some of those who adopt the other view do so in the interests of the authenticity of the commandments. They say, We must be careful not to put into them any idea which transcends what was possible in the days of Moses; otherwise we must agree with those who bring down the date of these marvellous ten words to the middle of the seventh century B.C. But there is much ground for distrusting modern judgments as to what men can have thought and felt in earlier and ruder stages of society. So long as the *naïve* interpretation of the state of man before the fall prevailed, which Milton has made so widely popular, the tendency was to exaggerate the early man's moral and spiritual attainments. Now, when the most degraded savages are taken as the truest representatives of primitive man, the temptation is to minimise both unduly. How often have we been told, for example, that the Australian is the lowest of mankind, and that he has no other idea of a spiritual world

than that when he dies he will "jump up" a white man! Yet Mr. A. W. Howitt,[1] an unexceptionable authority, as having himself been "initiated" among the Australian blacks, tells us that they give religious and moral instruction to their boys when they receive the privileges of manhood. His words are: "The teachings of the initiation are in a series of 'moral lessons,' pantomimically displayed in a manner intended to be so impressive as to be indelible. There is clearly a belief in a Great Spirit, or rather an anthropomorphic Supernatural Being, the 'Master of all,' whose abode is above the sky, and to whom are attributed powers of omnipotence and omnipresence, or, at any rate, the power 'to do anything and to go anywhere.' The exhibition of his image to the novices, and the magic dances round it, approach very near to idol-worship. The wizards who profess to communicate with him, and to be the mediums of communication between him and his tribe, are not far removed from an organised priesthood. To his direct ordinance are attributed the spiritual and moral laws of the community. Although there is no worship of Daramülun, as, for instance, by prayer, yet there is clearly an invocation of him by name, and a belief that certain acts please while others displease him." To most it would have seemed absurd to attribute religious ideas of such a kind to a people in the social and moral condition of the Australian aborigines. Yet here we have the testimony of a perfectly competent and reliable witness, who, moreover, has no personal bias in favour of theologic notions, to prove that even in their present state their theology is of this comparatively advanced kind.

Many critics like Stade, and even Kuenen, would deny to Israel in the days of Moses any conception of

[1] *Journal Anthropological Institute*, May 1884, p. 28.

Yahweh which would equal the Australian conception of Daramülun! Not to speak of the "regrettable vivacities" of Renan in regard to Yahweh, Kuenen would deny to the Mosaic Yahweh the title of Lord of all; he would deny to Him the power "to go anywhere and to do anything," binding Him strictly to His tribe and His land; he would make His priests little more than the Australian wizards; and purely moral laws like the Decalogue Wellhausen would remove to a late date mainly because such laws transcend the limits of the thought and knowledge of the Mosaic time. But can any one believe that Israel in the Mosaic time had lower beliefs than those of the Australian aborigines? In every other respect they had left far behind them the social state and the merely embryonic culture of the Australian tribes. Moses himself is an irrefragable proof of that. No such man as he could have arisen among a people in the state of the Australians. Even the fact that the Hebrews had lived in Egypt, and had been compelled to do forced labour for a long series of years, would of itself have raised them to a higher stage of culture. Moreover they built houses, and owned sheep and cattle, and must have known at least the rudiments of agriculture. Indeed Deut. xi. 10 asserts this, and the testimony of travellers as to the habits of the tribes in the wilderness of the wanderings now confirms it. Further, they had been in contact with Egyptian religion, and they had been surrounded by cults having more or less relation to the ancient civilisations of Mesopotamia. Under such circumstances, even apart from all revelation, it could not be assumed that their religious ideas must needs correspond to modern notions of the low type of primitive religions. On the contrary, nothing but the clearest proof that their religious conceptions were so surprisingly low should induce us to believe it. On any supposition, they had

in the Mosaic time the first germs of what is now universally admitted to be the highest form of religion. Can we believe that only 1300 years B.C., in the full light of history, coming out of a land where the religion of the people had been systematised and elaborated, not for centuries, but for millenniums, and only 600 years before the monotheistic prophets, a people at such a stage of civilisation as the Hebrews can have had cruder notions of Deity than the Wiraijuri and Wolgal tribes of New South Wales![1] It may have been so; but before we take it to have been so, we have a right to demand evidence of a stringent kind, evidence which leaves us no way of escape from a conclusion so improbable.

Moreover the acceptance of the view now opposed does not get rid of the necessity for supernatural enlightenment in Israel. It only transfers it from an earlier to a later time. For if the knowledge of Israel in Moses' day was below the Wolgal standard, then it would seem inexplicable that the ethical monotheism of the prophets should have grown out of it by any merely natural process. If there were no inspiration before the prophets, though they believed and asserted there was, then their own inspiration only becomes the more marvellous. It is not needful to deny that the Hebrew tribes may at some time have passed through the low stage of religious belief of which these writers speak. But they err conspicuously in regarding every trace of animistic and fetichistic worship which can be unearthed in the language, the ceremonies, and the habits of the Hebrews at the Exodus, as evidence of the highest beliefs of the people at that time. As a matter of fact, these were probably mere survivals of a state of thought and feeling

[1] See Page Renouf, *Hibbert Lectures*.

then either superseded or in the process of being so. Besides, the mass of any people always lag far behind the thoughts and aspirations of the highest thinkers of their nation; and if we admit inspiration at all as a factor in the religious development of Israel, the distance between what Moses taught and believed himself, and what he could get the mass of the people to believe and practise, must have been still greater. If he gave the people the ten commandments, he must have been far above them, and dogmatic assertions as to what he can have thought and believed ought to be abandoned.

Granting, however, that all we have found in the Decalogue's conception of Yahweh was present to the mind of Moses, and granting that the commands which deal with the relations of men to each other are not mere isolated prohibitions, but are founded upon moral principles which were understood even then to have much wider implications, there still remains a gap between the widest meaning that early time could put into them, and that which Luther's Catechism, or the Catechism of the Westminster Divines, for example, asserts. The question therefore arises whether these wider and more detailed explanations, which make the Decalogue cover the whole field of the moral and religious life, are legitimate, and if so, on what principle can they be justified? The reply would seem to be that they are legitimate, and that the ten words did contain much more than Moses or any of his nation for many centuries after him understood. For any fruitful thought, any thought which really penetrates the heart of things, must have in it wider implications than the first thinker of it can have conceived. If by any means a man has had insight to see the central fact of any domain of thought and life, its applications will not be limited to the comparatively few cases to which he may apply it. He will generally

be content to deduce from his discovery just those conclusions which in his circumstances and in his day are practically useful and are most clamorously demanded. But those who come after, pressed by new needs, challenged by new experiences, and enlightened by new thoughts in related regions, will assuredly find that more was involved in that first step than any one had seen. The scope of the fruitful principle will thus inevitably widen with the course of things, and inferences undreamed of by those who first enunciated the principle will be securely drawn from it by later generations. Now if that be true in regard to truths discovered by the unassisted intellect of man, how much more true will it be of thoughts which have first been revealed to man under the influence of inspiration? Behind the human mind which received them and applied them to the circumstances which then had to be dealt with, there is always the infinite mind which sees that

> "Far-off Divine event
> To which the whole creation moves."

The Divine purpose of the revelation must be the true measure of the thoughts revealed, and the Divine purpose can best be learned by studying the results as they have actually evolved themselves in the course of ages. Consequently, while the fundamental point in sound interpretation of a book such as the Bible is to ascertain *first* what the statements made therein signified to those who heard them first, the second point is not to shut the mind to the wider and more extensive applications of them which the thought and experience of men, taught by the course of history, have been induced, or even compelled, to make. Both the narrower and the wider meanings are there, and were meant to be found there. No exposition which ignores either can be adequate.

That all works of God are to be dealt with in this way

is beautifully demonstrated by Ruskin (*Fors Clavigera*, Vol. I., Letter V.). In criticising the statement of a botanist that "there is no such thing as a flower," after admitting that in a certain sense the lecturer was right, he goes on to say: "But in the deepest sense of all, he was to the extremity of wrongness wrong; for leaf and root and fruit exist, all of them, only—that there may be flowers. He disregarded the life and passion of the creature, which were its essence. Had he looked for these, he would have recognised that in the thought of nature herself, there is, in a plant, nothing else but flowers." That means, of course, that the final perfection of a development is the real and final meaning of it all. Now any thought given by God in this special manner which we call "inspiration" has in it a manifold and varied life, and an end in view, which God alone foresees. It works like leaven, it grows like a seed. It is supremely living and powerful; and though it may have begun its life, like the mustard seed, in a small and lowly sphere, it casts out branches on all sides till its entire allotted space is filled. So in the Decalogue; the central chord in all the matters dealt with has been touched with Divine skill, and all that has further to be revealed or learned on that matter must lie in the line of the first announcement.

It is not, therefore, an illegitimate extension of the meaning of the first commandment to say that it teaches monotheism, nor of the second that it teaches the spirituality of God, nor of the seventh that it forbids all sensuality in thought or word or deed. It is true that probably only the separateness of God was originally seen to be asserted in the first, and the words may possibly have been understood to mean that the "other gods" referred to had some kind of actual life. The second, too, may have seemed to be fulfilled when no earthly

thing that was made by man was taken to represent Yahweh. Lastly, those who say that nothing is forbidden in the seventh commandment but literal adultery have much to say for themselves. In a polygamous society concubinage always exists. The absence of the more flagrant of what in monogamous societies are called social evils does not in the least imply the superior morality, such as many who wish to disparage our Christian civilisation have ascribed, for instance, to Mohammedans. The degraded class of women who are the reproach and the despair of our large towns are not so frequent in those societies, because all women are degraded to nearer their level than in monogamous lands. Both lust and vice are more prevalent: and they are so because the whole level of thought and feeling in regard to such matters is much lower than with us.

Now, undoubtedly, ancient Israel was no exception to this rule. In it, as a polygamous nation, there was a licence in regard to sexual relations with women who were neither married nor betrothed which would be impossible now in any Christian community. It may be, therefore, that only the married woman was specially protected by this law. But in none of these cases did the more rudimentary conception of the scope of the commandments last. By imperceptible steps the sweep of them widened, until finally the last consequences were deduced from them, and they were seen to cover the whole sphere of human duty. It may have been a long step from the prohibition to put other gods along with Yahweh to St. Paul's decisive word "An idol is nothing in the world," but the one was from the first involved in the other. Between "Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image" and our Lord's declaration "God is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth," there lies a long and toilsome upward movement; but the first was

the gate into the path which must end in the second. Similarly, the commandment which affirmed so strongly the sacredness of the family, by hedging round the house-mother with this special defence held implicit in it all that rare and lovely purity which the best type of Christian women exhibit. The principles upon which the initial prohibitions were founded were true to fact and to the nature both of God and man. They were, therefore, never found at fault in the advancing stages of human experience; and the meaning which a modern congregation of Christians finds in these solemn "words," when they are read before them, is as truly and justly their meaning as the more meagre interpretation which alone ancient Israel could put upon them.

How gradually, and how naturally, the advancing thoughts and changed circumstances of Israel affected the Decalogue may be seen most clearly in the differences between its form as originally given, and as it is set forth in Exodus and in Deuteronomy. If the original form of these commandments was what we have indicated (p. 69), they corresponded entirely to the circumstances of the wilderness. There is no reference in them which presupposes any other social background than that of a people dwelling together according to families, possessing property, and worshipping Yahweh. None of the commandments involves a social state different from that. But when Israel had entered upon its heritage, and had become possessed of the oxen and asses which were needed in agricultural labour and in settled life, this stage of their progress was reflected in the reasons and inducements which were added to the original commands. In the fourth and tenth commandments of Exodus we have consequently the essential commandments of the earlier day adapted to a new state of things, *i.e.* to a settled agricultural life. Then, even as between the Exodus and

Deuteronomic texts, a progress is perceptible. The reasons for keeping the Sabbath which these two recensions give are different, as we have seen, and it is probable that the reason given in Deuteronomy was first. To the people in the wilderness came the bare Divine command that this one day was to be sacred to Yahweh. In both Exodus and Deuteronomy we have additions, going into details which show that when these versions were prepared Israel had ceased to be nomadic and had become agricultural. In Deuteronomy we find that the importance and usefulness of this command from a humane point of view had been recognised, and one at least of the grounds upon which it should be held a point of morality to keep it is set forth in the words "that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou." Finally, if the critical views be correct, in Exodus we have the motive for the observance of the Sabbath raised to the universal and eternal, by being brought into connection with the creative activity of God.

If the progression now traced out be real, then we have in it a classical instance of the manner in which Divine commands were given and dealt with in Israel. Given in the most general form at first, they inevitably open the way for progress, and as thought and experience grow in volume and rise in quality, so does the understanding of the law as given expand. Under the influence of this expansion addition after addition is made, till the final form is reached; and the whole is then set forth as having been spoken by Yahweh and given by Moses when the command was first promulgated. In such cases literary proprietorship was never in question. Each addition was sanctioned by revelation, and those by whom it came were never thought of. It would seem, indeed, that nothing but modern sceptical views as to the reality of revelation, the feeling that all this movement to a higher faith was merely

natural, and that the hand of God was not in it, could have suggested to the ancient Hebrew writers the wish to hand on the names of those by whom such changes were made. Yahweh spoke at the beginning, Moses mediated between the people and Yahweh, and the law thus mediated was in all forms equally Mosaic, and in all forms equally Divine.

One other thing remains to be noticed, and that is the prevailingly negative form of the commandments. Of the ten only the fourth and fifth are in the affirmative. All the others are prohibitions, and we who have been taught by Christianity to put emphasis upon the positive aspects of duty as the really important aspects of it, may not improbably feel chilled and repelled by a moral code which so definitely and prevailingly forbids. But the cause of this is plain. A code like that of the Twelve Tables published in early Rome is only occasionally negative, because it rises to no great height in its demands, and is intent only upon ordering the life of the citizens in their outward conduct. But this code, which seeks to raise the whole of life into the sacredness of a continual service of God and man, must forbid, because the first condition of such a life is the renunciation and the restriction of self. Benevolent dreamers and theorists of all ages, and men of the world whose moral standard is merely the attainment of the average man, have denied the evil tendency in man's nature. They have asserted that man is born good; but the facts of experience are entirely against them. Whenever a serious effort has been made to raise man to any conspicuous height of moral goodness, it has been found necessary to forbid him to follow the bent of his nature. "Thou shalt not" has been the prevailing formula; and in this sense original sin has always been witnessed to in the world. Hence the Old Testament, in which the most strenuous conflict

for goodness which the world in those ages knew was being carried on, could not fail, in every part of it, to proclaim that man is not born good. However late we may be compelled to put the writing of the story of the fall as it stands in Genesis, there can be no question that it represents the view of the Old Testament at all times. Man is fallen; he is not what he ought to be, and the evil taint is handed on from one generation to another. Every generation, therefore, is called, by prophet and priest and lawgiver alike, to the conflict against the natural man.

The truth is that all along the leaders of Israel had a quite overawing sense of the moral greatness of Yahweh and of the stringency of His demands upon them. "Be ye holy, for I am holy," was His demand; and so among this people, as among no other, the sense of sin was heightened, till it embittered life to all who seriously took to heart the religion they professed. This feeling sought relief in expiatory sacrifices, like the sin offering and the guilt offering; but in vain. It then led to Pharisaic hedging of the law, to seeking a positive precept for every moment of time, to binding upon men's consciences the most minute and burdensome prescriptions, as a means of making them what they must be if they were to meet the Divine requirements. But that too failed. It became a slavery so intolerable that, when St. Paul received the power of a new life, his predominant feeling was that for the first time he knew what liberty meant. He was set free from both the bondage of sin and the bondage of ritual.

To the religious man of the Old Testament life was a conflict against evil tendencies, a conflict in which defeat was only too frequent, but from which there was no discharge. It was fitting, therefore, that at the very beginning of Israel's history, as the people of God, this

stern prohibition of the rougher manifestations of the natural man should stand.

But it is characteristic of the Old Testament that it states the fundamental fact, without any of the over-refinements and exaggerations by which later doctrinal developments have discredited it. There is no appearance here, or anywhere in the Old Testament, of the Lutheran exaggeration that man is by nature impotent to all good, as a stock or a stone is. Keeping close to the testimony of the universal conscience, the Decalogue, and the Old Testament generally, speaks to men as those who can be otherwise if they will. There is, further, a robust assertion of righteous intention and righteous act on the part of those whose minds are set to be faithful to God. This may have been partly due to a blunter feeling in regard to sin, and a less highly developed conscience, but it was mainly a healthy assertion of facts which ought not to be ignored. Yet, with all that, original sin was too plain a fact ever to be denied by the healthy-minded saints of the Old Testament. Fundamentally, they held that human nature needed to be restrained, its innate lawlessness needed to be curbed, before it could be made acceptable to God.

Among the heathen nations that was not so. Take the Greeks, for instance, as the highest among them. Their watchword in morals was not repression, but harmonious development. Every impulse of human nature was right, and had the protection of a deity peculiarly its own. Restraint, such as the Israelite felt to be his first need, would have been regarded as mutilation by the Greek, for he was dominated by no higher ideal than that of a fully developed man. There was no vision of unattainable holiness hovering always before his mind, as there was before the mind of the Israelite. God had not revealed Himself to him in power and

unalloyed purity, with a background of infinite wisdom and omnipotence, so that unearthly love and goodness were seen to be guiding and ruling the world. As a consequence, the calling and destiny of man were conceived by the Greeks in a far less soaring fashion than by Israel. To put the difference in a few words, man, harmoniously developed in all his powers and passions and faculties, with nothing excessive about him, was made God by the Greeks; whereas in Israel God was brought down into human life to bear man's burden and to supply the strength needed that man might become like God in truth and mercy and purity. It is of course true that both conceived of God under human categories. They could not conceive God save by attributing to Him that which they looked upon as highest in man. It is also true that the higher natures in both nations, starting thus differently, did in much approach each other. Still, the immense difference remains, that the impulse in the one case was given from the earth by dreams of human perfection, in the other it came from above through men who had seen God. The Greeks had seen only the glory of man; Israel had seen the glory of God.

The result was that human nature as it is seemed to the one much more worthy of respect and much less seriously compromised than it did to the other. Comparing man as he is, only with man as he easily might be, the Greeks took a much less serious view of his state than the Hebrews, who compared him with God as He had revealed Himself. The former never attained any clear conception of sin, and regarded it as a passing weakness which could without much trouble be overcome. The latter saw that it was a radical and now innate want of harmony with God, which could only be cured by a new life being breathed into man from above. And when Europe became Christian, this difference made itself felt

in very widespread religious and theological divergences. In the South and among the Latin races the less strenuous view of human disabilities—the view which naturally grew out of the heathen conception of man as, on the whole, born good, with no very arduous moral heights to scale—has prevailed, and in those regions the Pelagian form of doctrine has mastered the Christian Church. But the Teutonic races have, in this matter, shown a remarkable affinity with the Hebrew mind and teaching. The deeper and more tragic view of the state of man has commended itself to the Teutonic mind, and the depth of the moral taint in the natural man has been estimated according to the Biblical standard. It is not only theologians among the Northern races who have been thus affected. The higher imaginative literature of England gives the same impression; and in our own day Browning, our greatest poet, has emphasised his acceptance of the Augustinian view of human nature by making its teaching as to original sin a proof of the truth of Christianity.[1] At the end of his poem "Gold Hair: a Story of Pornic," in which he tells how a girl of angelic beauty, and of angelic purity of nature as was supposed, is found after her death to have sold her soul to the most gruesome avarice, he says:—

> "The candid incline to surmise of late
> That the Christian faith may be false, I **find**;
> For our Essays and Reviews' debate
> Begins to tell on the public mind,
> And Colenso's words have weight:
>
> I still, to suppose it true, for my part,
> See reasons and reasons; this, to begin:
> 'Tis the faith that launched point-blank **her dart**
> At the head of a lie—taught original sin,
> The corruption of man's heart."

[1] Browning's *Poetical Works*, vol. vi., p. 69.

But the Pagan view always reasserts itself; and modern Hellenists especially, in their admiration of the grace which does undoubtedly go with such conceptions of goodness as the Greeks could attain, are apt to look askance at the harshness and strenuousness which they find in the Old Testament. For the most pathetic and pure of the Greek conceptions of the gods are those which, like Demeter, embody mother's love or some other natural glory of humanity. Being thus natural, they are set before us by the Greek imagination with an unconstrained and graceful beauty which makes goodness appeal to the æsthetic sense. To do this seems to many the supreme achievement. Without this they hold that Christianity would fail to meet the requirements of the modern heart and mind, for to interest "taste" on the side of goodness is, apparently, better than to let men feel the compulsion of duty. Reasoning on such premisses, they claim that Greek religion gave to Christianity its completion and its crown. This is the claim advanced by Dyer in his *Gods of Greece* (p. 19). "The Greek poets and philosophers," he says, "are among our intellectual progenitors, and therefore the religion of to-day has requirements which include all that the noblest Greeks could dream of, requirements which the aspirations of Israel alone could not satisfy. Our complex life had need, not only of a supreme God of power, universal and irresistible, of a jealous God beside whom there was no other God, but also of a God of love and grace and purity. To these ideal qualities, present in the Diviner godhead of the Gospels, the evolution of Greek mythology brought much that satisfies our hearts." The best answer to that is to read Deuteronomy. The Hebrews had no need to borrow "a God of love and grace and purity" from Greek mythology. Centuries before they came in contact with Greeks, their inspired men had painted the love and grace and purity of God in

the most attractive colours. Nor did they ever need to unlearn the belief that Yahweh was merely a supreme God of power. In the course of our exposition we shall have occasion to see that the worship of mere power was superseded by the religion of Yahweh from the first, and that the author of Deuteronomy gives his whole strength to demonstrate that the God of Israel is a "God of love and grace and purity." But perhaps "grace" means to Mr. Dyer "gracefulness." In that case we would deny that "the Diviner godhead of the Gospels," as revealed in Jesus Christ, had that æsthetic quality either. There is no word of an appeal to the sense of the artistically beautiful in anything recorded of Him; but neither in the Old Testament nor the New is there any want of moral beauty in the representation given of God. Moral beauty alone has a central place in religion; and when beauty that appeals to the senses intrudes into religion, it becomes a source of weakness rather than of strength. There may be a few people who can trust to their taste to keep them firm in the pursuit of goodness, but the bulk of men have always needed, and will always need, the severer compulsion of duty. They need an objective standard; they need a God, the embodiment and enforcer of all that duty demands of them; and when they bend themselves to the yoke of obligation thus imposed, they enter into a world of heavenly beauty which seizes and enraptures the soul. The mere æsthetic beauty of Greek mythology pales, for the more earnest races of mankind at least, before this Diviner loveliness, and it is the special gift of the Hebrew as well as of the Teutonic races to be sensitive to it, just as they fall behind others in æsthetic sensitiveness. Wordsworth felt this, and has expressed it inimitably in his "Ode to Duty"—

> "Stern Lawgiver! yet Thou dost wear
> The Godhead's most benignant grace

Nor know we anything so fair
As is the smile upon Thy face."

That expresses the Hebrew feeling also. Drawn upwards by the infinite and unchangeable love and goodness of Yahweh, the Hebrews felt the clog of their innate sinfulness as no other race has done. The stern "thou shalt nots" of the Decalogue consequently found an echo in their hearts. Won by the beauty of holiness, they gladly welcomed the discipline of the Divine law, and by doing so they established human goodness on a foundation immeasurably more stable than any the gracefulness of Greek imaginations could hope to lay.

CHAPTER VI

THE MEDIATORSHIP OF MOSES

DEUT. v. 22-33

AFTER the ten commandments, Deuteronomy, like Exodus, next indicates that for all of legislation, exhortation, and advice that follows, Moses was to be the mediator between God and the people. He is represented as Yahweh's prophet or speaker in all that succeeds; the Decalogue alone is set forth as the direct Divine command. Evidently a great distinction is here notified, and what it exactly was may be best explained by reference to the history of Roman law. In the earliest times that consisted of *Fas*, *Jus*, and *Jus moribus constitutum*. In Chapter IV. Professor Muirhead's description of *fas* has been given at length, so that we need not repeat it here. The point to remember is that it consisted of universal precepts such as the Decalogue contains, given direct by God. *Jus* again was, according to Breal, the Divine will declared by human agency, and it occupied much the position which law does in civilised states now. Finally, *jus moribus constitutum*, or *boni mores*, was customary law, which had a twofold function. "It was (1) a restraint upon the law, condemning, though it could not prevent, the ruthless and unnecessary exercise of legal right. (2) It was a supplement to law (*jus*), requiring things law did not, *e.g.* dutiful service, respect and obedience, chastity, fidelity to engagements, etc." Now it is a striking fact that, though there can be no

question of imitation here, the legislation of Deuteronomy falls naturally into these very divisions; and that fact of itself gives strong support to the belief that here in Israel, as there in Rome, we have the recorded facts of the earliest efforts at the regulation of national life. The *fas*, then, corresponds to the Decalogue. The *jus* runs exactly parallel with the laws in the strict sense of the term, those which Moses received from Yahweh and afterwards promulgated. Lastly, the *boni mores* are represented in Deuteronomy by those beautiful precepts which limited the exercise of legal right, and, going far beyond law, demanded of Israel that they should make good their claim to be Yahweh's people by justice, charity, and purity.

To some it may seem that we do no service to Scripture by insisting upon such a parallel. They will feel as if thereby the unique character of the religion of Israel as a revealed religion were obscured, if not obliterated. But nothing can be imagined which could confirm us in belief of the substantial accuracy of what we find narrated of early times in Scripture, more than the discovery that, without any possibility of collusion, the earliest records of civilisation elsewhere give us precisely the same account of the forms in which law first makes its appearance. Surely we ought now to have learned this lesson at least, that it is no disparagement to a Divinely given system of law and religion, that its growth and development run in the same channels as the growth and development of similar systems which have none of the marks of a Divine origin. Revelation always seizes upon mind as it is, and makes that a sufficient and effective channel for itself. However it is to be explained, it is true that Divine action generally seeks to hide itself in the ordinary course of human things as quickly as possible. It is only at the moment of contact, or at the moment when it

has burst orth in some flower of more than earthly grace and loveliness, or when it has overturned and overturned until that state of things which has a right to endure has been attained, that the Divine force reveals itself. For the most part it sinks into the general sum of forces that are making for the progress of humanity, and clothes itself gladly in the uniform of other beneficent but natural influences. Consequently it ought to be a welcome fact that so close a parallel exists between the origins of Roman law and the origins of Hebrew law. The one great gain already mentioned, that it explains the early appearance of the Decalogue, and shows that some such laws would naturally be among the primary laws of Israel, would be sufficient to justify that view; while in addition the distinctions from the early laws of Rome help us to classify in clear broad masses the somewhat disordered series of Deuteronomic laws.

On one point only does the parallel seem questionable. If we followed it alone as our guide, we should have to set down the mediatorship of Moses, as a mere part of the method, as belonging to the formal side only of the great revelation. In other words, we should have to ask whether the statement we have in Deut. v. 22-30 is only an emotional and pictorial way of setting forth the fact that, following and supplementing the elementary and Divinely given Hebrew *fas*, there was also a Divinely given but humanly mediated *jus*. But clearly it means much more than that. By the earlier prophets, and generally in all earlier delineations of him, Moses is regarded as a prophet who had more direct and continuous access to the Divine presence than any other prophet of Israel. Moreover he had always been represented from the earliest times as standing between Yahweh and His people, holding on to the one and refusing to let the other go. In the great scene, taken from the earliest con-

stituents of the Pentateuch and narrated in Exod. xxxii., we see him anticipating by centuries the wonderful picture of the Servant of God in Isa. liii., and by a still more amazing stretch of time, that Divinest wish of St. Paul, that he himself might be accursed even from Christ for his brethren's sake. He thus stood between Yahweh and His people both as the organ of Revelation and as the self-forgetting intercessor, who suffered for sins not his own, as well as for sins which his connection with his nation had brought upon him; who, instead of repining, was willing to be blotted out of God's book if that could benefit his people.

This representation of Moses is not accidental. It is in complete accord with a characteristic of Israelite literature from beginning to end. In the earliest historical records we find that the chief heroes of the nation are mediators, standing for God in the face of evil men, and pleading with God for men when they are broken and penitent, or even when they are only terrified and restrained by the terror of the Lord. At the beginning of the national history we see the noble figure of Abraham in an agony of supplication and entreaty before God on behalf of the cities of the plain. At the end of it, we see the Christ, the supreme "mediator between God and man," pouring out His soul unto death for men "while they were yet sinners," dying, the just for the unjust, taking upon Himself the responsibility for the sin of man, and refusing to let him wander away into permanent separation from God. And all between is in accord with this. For it is not Moses only who is regarded as having a mediatorial office. The very people itself is set, by the promise given to Abraham, in the same position. As early at least as the eighth century it was put before Israel, that their calling was not for their own sakes only, but that in them all nations of the earth might be blessed. And at their

highest moments the prophets and teachers of Israel always recognised this as their nation's part. Even when they were being scattered among the heathen, it was that they might be the means of bringing the knowledge of Yahweh to the nations. From end to end of Scripture, therefore, this conception is wrought into the very fibre of its utterances. It is of the essence of the Biblical conception of God that He should work among men by mediators. In no other way could the primary Divine message be set forth than by the prophetic voice; in no other way than by the intercession and the suffering of those most in harmony with the Divine will could any effective hold upon God be given to His people. Only by those who thus proved that they had seen Yahweh could His character be expressed. Further, it was in this way that Moses and the prophets, the rulers and the saints of Israel, were types of Christ. They were not mere puppets set forth in certain crises of Israel's history to go through a certain career, live a certain life, and pass into and out of a number of scenes, in order that they might afford us, upon whom the end of the world has come, pictorial proofs that all things in this history were pressing towards and converging upon Christ. That would be a very artificial way of conceiving the matter. No, each of these types was a real man, with real tasks of his own to accomplish in the world. Not only were they all real men, they were the leading men of their various times. They bore the burden of their day more than others; they were the special organs of Divine power and grace; and their lives were spent in giving impulse and direction to the movements of their people's life towards the strange, unlooked-for consummation appointed for it. They were types of Christ, they gave promise of Him, not because of mere arbitrary appointment or selection, but because they did in their day, in a lower degree and at an earlier stage,

the very same work that He did. Further, the whole nation was a type of Christ in so far as it was true to its calling at all. It was the prophet and the priest among nations. It spread abroad the knowledge of Him, and it died at last as a nation that life might be given to the world. Both Israel and all the men who truly represented it were partakers in the labours and in the sufferings of Christ beforehand, just as Christians are said to fill up the measure of His sufferings now. The mediatorial character of Moses, therefore, was essential. It is no merely formal thing, nor an afterthought. He would have been no fit founder of the mediatorial nation had he not been a mediator himself, for not otherwise could he have helped to realise the Abrahamic promise.

But there is another subsidiary reason why a mediator was necessary to Israel at this stage. Behind all that Moses taught his people lay necessarily the ancient popular religion of the Hebrews. Now, except in so far as it may have been changed in Egypt, that was in its main features the same as the religion of the other nomadic tribes of Semitic stock, for the Abrahamic faith was, clearly, known but to few. But the names given to their deities by these people—such as Baal, Adhonai, Milcom, etc.—"all expressed submission to the irresistible power revealing itself in nature," just as "Islam," which means "submission," indicates that Mohammedanism is a mere perpetuation of this view.[1] Consequently the Israelite people were unable to conceive God save as a devouring presence, before which no man could live. The Mosaic view was, in itself, immeasurably higher, and, besides that, it opened up the path to attainments then inconceivable. Moses therefore had to stand alone in his new relation to God, while the people cowered away

[1] Cf. Schultz, *Alttestamentliche Theologie*, p. 92.

in terror, dominated entirely by the lower conception. They could not stand where he stood. They were unable to believe that power was not Yahweh's only attribute; while Moses had had revealed to him, in germ at least, that God was "merciful and gracious, longsuffering and slow to anger," and that a life passed in His presence was the ideal life for man. Both the Yahwistic narrative in Exodus and the repetition of it in Deuteronomy give the same representation of the events at Sinai, and indicate quite clearly that, while the old relation to God was in itself good so far, it was to be superseded by that higher relation in which Moses stood. That is the meaning of the words in Deut. v. 28, 29: "And Yahweh said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken unto thee; they have well said all that they have spoken. Oh that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments, always, that it might be well with them and with their children for ever!" The parallel passage in Exodus is xx. 20: "And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that His fear may be before you, that ye sin not." In both, the standpoint of fear is approved as relatively good and wholesome. It was well that the people should have this awestruck fear of the Divine, for it would act as a deterrent from sin. But it was not sufficient. It was only the starting-point for the attainments which Yahweh by Moses, and in Moses, was about to call and incite them to. Moses therefore had to stand between Israel and Yahweh in this too, that he had entered into and lived in relations with his God which they were as yet unable either to conceive or to endure.

It is well to add, also, that in giving approval of this kind to fear as a religious motive these early teachers were entirely in accord with the final development of

Israelite religion in the New Testament. The modern view that any appeal to fear in religion or morality is degrading would have been simply unintelligible to the Biblical writers. Even now, the whole fabric of society, the state with its officials and the law with its penalties, are a continual protest against it in the realm of practical morality. In truth the conflict raised about this matter in modern times is simply a conflict between superfine theories and facts. Now the Old Testament is throughout supremely true to the facts of human nature and human experience. It is practically a transcript of them as seen in the light of revelation. In a time, therefore, when in morals and religion physical fact is being allowed to override or pervert psychical fact, the Old Testament view is peculiarly wholesome. It helps to restore the balance and to keep man's thoughts sane.

Another point on which this narrative of Deuteronomy corrects and restores that which the tendency of modern thought has perverted is an even more important one. We have seen that the Old Testament view, as stated here, and as it is interwoven with the central fibres of the Old Testament conception, is that all men who are called to the task of permanently raising the level of human life and thought must give not only their light to, but their life for, those whom they seek to win for God. They must ask nothing from mankind but ever widening opportunities for service and self-sacrifice. But in our modern day this has been precisely reversed, and men like Goethe and Schopenhauer, and even Carlyle, have demanded that mankind should yield service to them, and then, by the furtherance and development they thereby attain, they promise to work out the deliverance of men from superstition and unreality and the bondage of ignorance. Goethe in this matter is typical. He preached and practised in the most uncompromising manner the

doctrine of self-development. He thought that he could serve humanity in no way so well as by making every one he met, and all the experiences he encountered, minister to his own intellectual growth. Instead of saying with Moses, "Blot me out of Thy book," but spare these dim idolatrous masses, he would have said, "Let them all perish and let me become the origin of a wiser, more intellectual, more self-restrained race than they." He consequently pursued his own ends relentlessly from his early years, and attained results so immense that almost every domain of thought, speculation, and science is now under some debt to him. But for all purposes of inspiring moral and spiritual enthusiasm he is practically useless. His selfishness, however high its kind, accomplished its work and left him cold, unapproachable, isolated. This want of love for men made him the accurate critic of human nature, but left him blind in great degree and hopeless altogether in regard to those possibilities of better things which are never wholly wanting to it. The result is that, notwithstanding his heroic powers, his influence is to-day rather a minus quantity in the spiritual and moral life. No one who has not warmth from other sources pouring in upon him can have much communion with Goethe without losing vitality, and in his presence the Divine passion of self-sacrificing love looks out of place, or even slightly absurd. His power is fascinating, but it freezes all the sources of the nobler spiritual emotions, and ultimately must tend to the impoverishing of human nature and the lowering of the level of human life. No; men are not to be reached so if it is wished to raise them to their highest powers, and all experience proves that the New Testament was right in summing up the teaching of the Old by the words, "He that saveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it."

"That is the doctrine, simple, ancient, true;
Such is life's trial, as old earth smiles and knows.
If you loved only what were worth your love,
Love were clear gain, and wholly well for you;
Make the low nature better by your throes!
Give earth yourself, go up for gain above!"[1]

[1] Browning, "James Lee's Wife," VII.

CHAPTER VII

LOVE TO GOD THE LAW OF LIFE

DEUT. vi. 4, 5

IN these verses we approach "the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments" which it was to be Moses' duty to communicate to the people, *i.e.* the second great division of the teaching and guidance received at Sinai. But though we approach them we do not come to them for a number of chapters yet. We reach them only in chapter xii., which begins with almost the same words as chapter vi. What lies between is a new exhortation, very similar in tone and subject to that into which chapters i—iii. have been transformed.

To some readers in our day this repetition, and the renewed postponement of the main subject of the book, have seemed to justify the introduction of a new author here. They are scornfully impatient of the repetition and delay, especially those of them who have themselves a rapid, dashing style; and they declare that the writer of the laws, etc., from chapter xii. onwards cannot have been the writer of these long double introductions. *They* would not have written so; consequently no one else, however different his circumstances, his objects, and his style may be, can have written so. It is true, they admit, that the style, the grammar, the vocabulary are all exactly those of the purely legal chapters, but that matters not. Their irritation with this

delay is decisive; and so they introduce us, entirely on the strength of it, to another Deuteronomist, second or third or fourth—who knows? But all this is too purely subjective to meet with general acceptance, and we may without difficulty decide that the linguistic unity of the book, when chapters vi. to xii. are compared with what we find after xii., is sufficient to settle the question of authorship.

But we have now to consider the possible reasons for this second long introduction. The first introduction has been satisfactorily explained in a former chapter; this second one can, I think, quite as easily be accounted for. The object of the book is in itself a sufficient explanation. To modern critical students of the Old Testament the laws are the main interest of Deuteronomy. They are the material they need for their reconstruction of the history of Israel, and they feel as if all besides, though it may contain beautiful thoughts, were irrelevant. But that was not the writer's point of view at all. For him it was not the main thing to introduce new laws. He was conscious rather of a desire to bring old laws, well known to his fellow-countrymen, but neglected by them, into force again. Anything new in his version of them was consequently only such an adaptation of them to the new circumstances of his time as would tend to secure their observance. Even if Moses were the author of the book this would be true; but if a prophetic man in Manasseh's day was the author, we can see how naturally and exclusively that view would fill his mind. He had fallen upon evil times. The best that had been attained in regard to spiritual religion had been deliberately abandoned and trodden under foot. Those who sympathised with pure religion could only hope that a time would come when Hezekiah's work would be taken up again. If Deuteronomy was written in preparation for

that time, the legal additions necessary to ward off the evils which had been so nearly fatal to Yahwism would seem to the author much less important than they appear to us to be. His object was to retrieve what had been lost, to rouse the dead minds of his countrymen, to illustrate that on which the higher life of the nation depended, and to throw light upon it from all the sources of what then was modern thought. His mind was full of the high teaching of the prophets. He was steeped in the history of his people, which was then receiving, or was soon to receive, its all but final touches. He was intensely anxious that in the later time for which he was writing all men should see how Providence had spoken for the Mosaic law and religion, and what the great principles were which had always underlain it, and which had now at last been made entirely explicit.

Under these circumstances, it was not merely natural that the author of Deuteronomy should dwell with insistence upon the hortatory part of his book; it was necessary. He could not feel Wellhausen's haste to approach his restatement of the law. To him the exhortation was, in fact, the important thing. Every day he lived he must have seen that it was not want of knowledge that misled his contemporaries. He must have groaned too often under the weight of the indifference even of the well disposed not to be aware that that was the great hindrance to the restoration of the better thoughts and ways of Hezekiah's day.

He had learned by bitter experience, what every man who is in earnest about inducing masses of men to take a step backward or forward to a higher life always learns, that nothing can be accomplished till a fire has been kindled in the hearts of men which will not let them rest. To this task the author of Deuteronomy devotes himself. And whatever impatient theorists of to-day may

say, he succeeds amazingly. His exhortation touches men from one end of the world to the other, even to this day, by its affectionate impressiveness. His exhibition of the principles underlying the law is so true that, when our Lord was asked, "Which is the first commandment of all?" He answered from this chapter of Deuteronomy: "The first of all the commandments is this, The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength. The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these." Now these are precisely the truths Deuteronomy exhibits in these prefatory chapters, and it is by them that the after-treatment of the law is permeated. The author of Deuteronomy by announcing these truths brought the Old Testament faith as near to the level of the New Testament faith as was possible; and we may well believe that he saw his work in its true relative proportions. The hortatory chapters are really the most original part of the book, and exhibit what was most permanent in it. The mere fact that the author lingers over it, therefore, is entirely inadequate to justify us in admitting a later hand. Indeed, if criticism is to retain the respect of reasonable men, it will have to be more sparing than it has hitherto been with the "later hand"; to introduce it here under the circumstances is nothing short of a blunder.

In our verses, therefore, we have to deal with the main point of our book. Coming immediately after the Decalogue, these words render explicit the principle of the first table of that law. In them our author is making it clear that all he has to say of worship, and of the relation of Israel to Yahweh, is merely an application of this principle, or a statement of means by which a life at the level of love to God may be made possible or

secured. This section, therefore, forms the bridge which connects the Decalogue with the legal enactments which follow; and it is on all accounts worthy of very special attention. Our Lord's quotation of it as the supreme statement of the Divine law, in its Godward aspect, would in itself be an overwhelmingly special reason for thorough study of it, and would justify us in expecting to find it one of the deepest things in Scripture.

The translation of the first clause presents difficulties. The Authorised Version gives us, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord," but that can no longer be accepted, since it rests upon the Jewish substitution of Adhonai for Yahweh. Taking this view of the construction, it should be rendered, "Hear, O Israel: Yahweh our God is one Yahweh"; and this is the meaning which most recent authorities—*e.g.* Knobel, Keil, and Dillmann—put upon it. But equally good authorities—such as Ewald and Oehler—render, "Yahweh our God—Yahweh is one." This is unobjectionable grammatically. Still another translation, "Hear, O Israel: Yahweh is our God, Yahweh alone," has been received by the most recent and most scholarly German translation of the Scripture, that edited by Kautzsch. But the objection that in that case *l bhaddo*, not *'echādh*, should have been used, seems conclusive against it. The two others come very much to the same thing in the end, and were it not for the time at which Deuteronomy was written, Ewald's translations would be the simpler and more acceptable. But the first—"Yahweh our God is one Yahweh"—exactly meets the circumstances of that time, and moreover emphasises that in Israel's God which the writer of Deuteronomy was most anxious to establish. As against the prevailing tendency of the time, he not only denies polytheism, or, as Dillmann puts it, asserts the concrete fact that the true God cannot be resolved in the polytheistic manner into various kinds

and shades of deity, like the Baalim, but he also prohibits the amalgamation or partial identification of Him with other gods. Though very little is told us concerning Manasseh s idolatry, we know enough to feel assured that it was in this fashion he justified his introduction of Assyrian deities into the Temple worship. Moloch, for example, must in some way have been identified with Yahweh, since the sacrifices of children in Tophet are declared by Jeremiah to have been to Yahweh. Further, the worship at the High Places had led, doubtless, to belief in a multitude of local Yahwehs, who in some obscure way were yet regarded as one, just as the multitudinous shrines of the Virgin in Romanist lands lead to the adoration of our Lady of Lourdes, our Lady of Étaples, and so on, though the Church knows only one Virgin Mother. This incipient and unconscious polytheism it was our author's purpose to root out by his law of one altar; and it seems congruous, therefore, that he should sum up the first table of the Decalogue in such a way as to bring out its opposition to this great evil. Of course the oneness of deity as such is involved in what he says; but the aspect of this truth which is specially put forward here is that Yahweh, being God, is one Yahweh, with no partners, nor even with variations that practically destroy unity. No proposition could have been framed more precisely and exactly to contradict the general opinion of Manasseh and his followers regarding religion; and in it the watchword of monotheism was spoken. Since it was uttered, this has been the rallying point of monotheistic religion, both among Jews and Mohammedans. For "there is no God but God" is precisely the counterpart of "Yahweh is one Yahweh"; and from one end of the civilised world to the other this strenuous confession of faith has been heard, both as the tumultuous battle-shout of victorious armies, and as the stubborn

and immovable assertion of the despised, and scattered, and persecuted people to whom it was first revealed. Even to-day, though in the hands of both Jews and Mohammedans it has been hardened into a dogma which has stripped the Mosaic conception of Yahweh of those elements which gave it possibilities of tenderness and expansion, it still has power over the minds of men. Even in such hands, it incites missionary effort, and it appeals to the heart at some stages of civilisation as no other creed does. It makes men, nay, even civilised men, of the wild fetich-worshipping African; but for want of what follows in our context it leaves them stranded—at a higher level, it is true, but stranded nevertheless—without possibilities of advance, and exposed to that terrible decay in their moral and spiritual conceptions which sooner or later asserts itself in every Mohammedan community.

Israel was saved from the same spiritual disease by the great words which succeed the assertion of Yahweh's oneness. The writer of Deuteronomy did not desire to set forth this declaration as an abstract statement of ultimate truth about God. He makes it the basis of a quite new, a quite original demand upon his countrymen Because Yahweh thy God is one Yahweh, "thou shalt love Yahweh thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." To us, who have inherited all that was attained by Israel in their long and eventful history as a nation, and especially in its disastrous close, it may have become a commonplace that God demands the love of His people. But if so, we must make an effort to shake off the dull yoke of custom and familiarity. If we do, we shall see that it was an extraordinarily original thing which the Deuteronomist here declares. In the whole of the Old Testament there are, outside of Deuteronomy, thirteen passages in which the *love* of men to Yahweh is spoken of. They are

Exod. xx. 6; Josh. xxii. 5, xxiii. 11; Judges v. 31; 1 Kings iii. 3; Neh. i. 5; Psalms xviii. 2, xxxi. 24, xci. 14, xcvii. 10, cxvi. 1, cxlv. 20; and Dan. ix. 4. Now of these the verses from Nehemiah and Daniel are manifestly later than Deuteronomy, and of the Psalms only the eighteenth can with any confidence be assigned to a time earlier than the seventh century B.C. All the others may with great probability be assigned at earliest to the times of Jeremiah and the post-exilic period. Three of the passages from the historic books again—Josh. xxii. 5, xxiii. 11; 1 Kings iii. 3—are attributed, on grounds largely apart from the use of this expression, to the Deuteronomic editor, *i.e.* the writer who went over the historical books about 600 B.C., and made slight additions here and there, easily recognisable by their differing in tone and feeling from the surrounding context. Indeed Josh. xxii. 5 is a palpable quotation from Deuteronomy itself.

Of the thirteen passages, therefore, only three—Exod. xx. 6, Judges v. 31, and Psalm xviii. 2—belong to the time previous to Deuteronomy, and in all three the mention of love to God is only allusive, and, as it were, by the way. Before Deuteronomy, consequently, there is little more than the mere occurrence of the word. There is nothing of the bold and decisive demand for love to the one God as the root and ground of all true relations with Him which Deuteronomy makes. At most, there is the hint of a possibility which might be realised in the future; of love to God as the permanent element in the life of man there is no indication; and it is this which the author of Deuteronomy means, and nothing less than this. He makes this demand for love the main element of his teaching. He returns to it again and again, so that there are almost as many passages bearing on this in Deuteronomy as in the whole Old Testament besides; and the particularity and emphasis with which he dwells upon it

are immeasurably greater. Only in the New Testament do we find anything quite parallel to what he gives us; and there we find his view taken up and expanded, till love to God flashes upon us from almost every page as the test of all sincerity and the guarantee of all success in the Christian life.

To proclaim this truth was indeed a great achievement; and when we remember the abject fear with which Israel had originally regarded Yahweh, it will appear still more remarkable that the book embodying this should have been adopted by the whole people with enthusiasm, and that with it should begin the Canon of Holy Scripture; for Deuteronomy, as all now recognise, was the first book which became canonical. I have said that the conception was an extraordinarily original one, and have pointed out that it had not been traceable to any extent previously in Israel's religious books or its religious men. It will appear still more original, I think, if we consider what a growth in moral and spiritual stature separates the Israel of Moses' day and that of Josiah's; what the attitude of other nations to their gods was in contrast to this; and, lastly, what it involves and implies, as regards the nature of both God and man.

As we have already seen, the earlier narratives represent the men to whom Moses spoke as acknowledging that they could not, as yet at any rate, bear to remain in the presence of Yahweh. Between their God and them, therefore, there could be no relation of love properly so called. There was reverence, awe, and chiefly fear, tempered by the belief that Yahweh as their God was on their side. He had proved it by delivering them from the oppressions of Egypt, and they acknowledged Him and were jealous for His honour and submissive to His commands. So far as the record goes, that would seem to have been their religious state. Progress from

that state of mind to a higher, to a demand for direct personal relations between each individual Israelite and Yahweh, was not easy. It was hindered by the fact that Israel as a whole, and not the individual, was for a long time regarded as the subject of religion. That, of course, was no hindrance to the development of the thought that Yahweh loved Israel; but so long as that conception dominated religious thought in Israel, so long was it impossible to think of individual love and trust as the element in which each faithful man should live.

But the love of Yahweh was declared, century after century, by prophet and priest and psalmist, to be set upon His people, and so the way for this demand for love on man's part was opened. Man's relations with God began to grow more intimate. The distance lessened, as the use of the words "them that love Me" in the song of Deborah and the Davidic word in Psalm xviii., "I love thee, Yahweh my rock," clearly show. Hosea next took up the strain, and intensified and heightened it in a wonderful manner, but the nation failed to respond adequately. In the later prophets the love and grace and longsuffering of Yahweh and His ceaseless efforts on behalf of Israel are continually made the ground of exhortations, entreaties, and reproaches; but, as a whole, the people still did not respond. We may be sure, however, that an ever increasing minority were affected by the clearness and intensity of the prophetic testimony. To this minority, the Israel within Israel, the remnant that was to return from exile and become the seed of a people that should be all righteous, the love of Yahweh tended to become His main characteristic. That love sustained their hopes; and though the awe and reverence which were due to His holiness, and the fear called forth by His power, still predominated, there grew up in their hearts a multitude of thoughts and

expectations tending more and more to the love of God.

As yet it was only a timid reaching out towards Him, a hope and longing which could hardly justify itself. Yet it was robust enough not to be killed by disappointment, by hope deferred, or even by crushing misfortune; and in the furnace of affliction it became stronger and more pure. And in the heart of the author of Deuteronomy it grew certain of itself, and soared up with an eagerness that would not be denied. Then, as always where God is the object of it, love that dares was justified; and out of its restless and timid longings it came to the "place of rest imperturbable, where love is not forsaken if itself forsaketh not."[1] From knowledge, confirmed by the answering love and inspiration of God, and impelled consciously by Him, he then in this book made and reiterated his great demand. All spiritual men found in it the word they had needed. They responded to it eagerly when the book was published; and their enthusiasm carried even the torpid and careless masses with them for a time. The nation, with the king at their head, accepted the legislation of which this love to God was the underlying principle, and so far as public and corporate action can go, Israel adopted the deepest principle of spiritual life as their own.

Of course with the mass this assent had little depth; but in the hearts of the true men in Israel the joy and assurance of their great discovery, that Yahweh their God was open to, nay, desired and commanded, their most fervent affection, soon produced its fruit. From the fragments of the earliest legislation which have come down to us, it is obvious that the Mosaic principles had led to a most unwonted consideration for the poor. In

[1] Augustine's *Confessions*, p. 64.

later days, though the ingrained tendency to oppression, which those who have power in the East seem quite unable to resist, did its evil work in both Israel and Judah, there were never wanting prophetic voices to denounce such villainy in the spirit of these laws. The public conscience was thereby kept alive, and the ideal of justice and mercy, especially to the helpless, became a distinguishing mark of Israelite religion. But it was in the minds of those who had learned the Deuteronomist's great lesson, and had taken example by him, that the love which came from God, and had just been answered back by man overflowed in a stream of blessing to man's "neighbours." Deuteronomy had uttered the first and great commandment; but it is in the Law of Holiness, that complex of ancient laws brought together by the author of P, and found now mainly in Lev. xvii.—xxvi., that we find the second word, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." [1] If we ask, Who is my neighbour? we find that not even those beyond Israel are excluded, for in Lev. xix. 34 we read, "The stranger that sojourneth with you shall be unto you as the homeborn among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself." The idea still needed the expansion which it received from our Lord Himself in the parable of the Good Samaritan; but it is only one step from these passages to the New Testament.

From the standpoint of mere fear, then, to the standpoint of love which casteth out fear, even the masses of Israel were lifted, in thought at least, by the love and teaching of God. And the process by which Israel was led to this height has proved ever since to be the only possible way to such an attainment. It began in the free favour of God, it was continued by the answer of love on the part of man, and these antecedents had as their consequence

[1] Lev. xix. 18, 34.

the proclamation of that law of liberty—for self-renouncing love is liberty—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Without the first, the second was impossible; and the last without the other two would have been only a satire upon the incurable selfishness of man. It is worthy of remark, at least, that only on the critical theory of the Old Testament is each of these steps in the moral and religious education of Israel found in its right place, with its right antecedents; only when taken so do the teachers who were inspired to make each of these attainments find circumstances suited to their message, and a soil in which the germs they were commissioned to plant could live.

But great as is the contrast between the Israel o Moses' day and that of Josiah's, it is not so great as the contrast between the religion of Israel in the Deuteronomic period and the religion of the neighbouring nations. Among them, at our date 650 B.C., there was, so far as we know them, no suggestion of personal love to God as an effective part of religion. In the chapters on the Decalogue the main ideas of the Canaanites in regard to religion have been described, so that they need not be repeated here. I shall add only what E. Meyer says of their gods: "With advancing culture the cultus loses its old simplicity and homeliness. A fixed ritual was developed—founded upon old hereditary tradition. And here the gloomier conception became the ruling one, and its consequences were inexorably deduced. The great gods, even the protecting gods of the tribe or the town, are capricious and in general hostile to man—possibly to some degree because of the mythological conception of Baal as sun-god—and they demand sacrifices of blood that they may be appeased. In order that evil may be warded off from those with whom they are angry, another human being must be offered to them as a substitute in propitiatory

sacrifice—nay, they demand the sacrifice of the firstborn, the best-loved son. If the community be threatened with the wrath of the deity, then the prince or the nobility as a whole must offer up their children on its behalf."[1] This also is the view of Robertson Smith,[2] who considers that while in their origin the Semitic religions involved kindly relations and continual intercourse between the gods and their worshippers, these gradually disappeared as political misfortune began to fall upon the smaller Semitic peoples. Their gods were angry and in the vain hope of appeasing them men had recourse to the direst sacrifices. Hints concerning these had survived from times of savagery; and to the diseased minds of these terror-stricken peoples the more ancient and more horrible a sacrifice was the more powerful did it seem. At this time, therefore, the course of the Canaanite religions was away from love to their gods. The decay of nationality brought despair, and the frantic efforts of despair, into the religion of the Canaanite peoples; but to Israel it brought this higher demand for more intimate union with their God. Whatever elements tending towards love the Canaanite religions originally may have had, they had either been mingled with the corrupting sensuality which seems inseparable from the worship of female deities, or had been limited to the mere superficial good understanding which their participation in the same common life established between the people and their gods. Their union was largely independent of moral considerations on either side. But in Israel there had grown up quite a different state of things. The union between Yahweh and His people had from the days of the Decalogue taken a moral turn; and gradually it had become clear that to have Abraham for their father and Yahweh for their God would profit them little, if

[1] *Geschichte des Alterthums*, p. 249.

[2] *Religion of the Semites*, p. 330.

they did not stand in right moral relations and in moral sympathy with Him. Now, in Deuteronomy, that fundamentally right conception of the relation between God and man received its crown in Yahweh's claim to the love of His people. No contrast could be greater than that which common misfortune and a common national ruin produced between the surrounding Semitic peoples and Israel.

But besides the small kingdoms which immediately surrounded Palestine, Israel had for neighbours the two great empires of Egypt and Assyria. She was exposed therefore to influence from them in even a greater degree. Long before the Exodus, the land which Israel came afterwards to occupy had been the meeting-place of Babylonian and Egyptian power and culture. In the fifteenth century B.C. it was under the suzerainty if not the direct sovereignty of Egypt; but its whole culture and literature, for it must have had books, as the name Kirjath-Sepher (Book-town) shows, was Babylonian. Throughout Israel's history, moreover, Assyrian and Egyptian manners and ways of thought were pressed upon the people; and we cannot doubt that in regard to religion also their influence was felt. But at this period, as in the Canaanite religions, so also in those of Assyria and Egypt, the tendency was altogether different from what Deuteronomy shows it to have been in Israel.

In regard to Egypt this is somewhat difficult to prove, for the Egyptian religion is so complicated, so varied, and so ancient, that men who have studied it despair of tracing any progress in it. A kind of monotheism, polytheism, fetichism, animism, and nature-worship such as we find in the Vedas, have in turn been regarded as its primitive state; but as a matter of fact all these systems of religious thought and feeling are represented in the earliest records, and they remained constant elements of it till the end.[1]

[1] Cf. Wiedemann, *Religion der alten Aegypter*, p. 3.

Whatever had once formed part of it, Egyptian religion clung to with extraordinary tenacity. As time went on, however, the accent was shifted from one element to the other, and after the times of the XIXth dynasty, *i.e.* after the time of the Exodus, it began to decay. A systematised pantheism, of which sun-worship was the central element, was elaborated by the priests; the moral element which had been prominent in the days when the picture of the judgment of the soul after death was so popular in Thebes retired more into the background, and the purely magical element became the principal one. Instead of moral goodness and the fulfilment of duty being the main support of the soul in its dread and lonely journeys in the "world of the Western sky," knowledge of the proper formulas became the chief hope, and the machinations of evil demons the main danger. In the royal tombs at Thebes the walls of the long galleries are covered with representations of these demons, and the accompanying writing gives directions as to the proper formulas by knowledge of which deliverance can be secured. This, of course, confined the benefits of religion, so far as they related to the life to come, to the educated, and the wealthy. For these secret spells were hard to obtain, and had to be purchased at a high price. As Wiedemann says, "Still more important than in this world was the knowledge of the correct magical words and formulas in the other world. No door opened here if its name was not known, no dæmon let the dead pass in if he did not address him in the proper fashion, no god came to his help so long as his proper title was not given him, no food could be procured so long as the exactly prescribed words were not uttered."[1] The people were therefore thrown back upon the ancient popular faith, which needed gods only for

[1] Wiedemann, p. 31, 35.

practical life, and honoured them only because they were mighty.[1] Some of them were believed to be friendly; but others were malevolent deities who would destroy mankind if they did not mollify them by magic, or render them harmless by the greater power of the good gods. Consequently Set, the unconquerable evil demon, was worshipped with zeal in many places. With him there were numerous demons, "the enemies," "the evil ones," which lie in wait for individuals, and threaten their life and weal. The main thing, therefore, was to bring the correct sacrifices, to use such formulas and perform such acts as would render the gods gracious and turn away evil. Moreover the whole of nature was full of spirits, as it is to the African of to-day, and in the mystic texts of the Book of the Dead, there is constant mention made of the "mysterious beings whose names, whose ceremonials are not known," which thirst for blood, which bring death, which go about as devouring flame, as well as of others which do good. At all times this element existed in Egypt; but precisely at this time, in the reign of Psamtik, Brugsch[2] declares that new force was given to it, and on the monuments there appear, along with the "great gods," monstrous forms of demons and genii. In fact the higher religion had become pantheistic, and consequently less rigidly moral. Magic had been taken up into it for the life beyond the grave, and became the only resource of the people in this life. Fear, therefore, necessarily became the ruling religious motive, and instead of growing toward love of God, men in Egypt at this time were turning more decisively than ever away from it.

Of the Assyrian religion and its influence it is also difficult to speak in this connection, for notwithstanding

[1] Cf. Meyer, p. 71.

[2] *Egypt under the Pharaohs*, Brodick's edition p. 423.

the amount of translation that has been done, not much has come to light in regard to the personal religion of the Assyrians. On the whole it seems to be established that in its main features the religion of both Babylon and Assyria remained what the non-Semitic inhabitants of Akkad had made it. Originally it had consisted entirely of a spirit and demon worship not one whit more advanced than the religion of the South Sea islanders to-day. As such it was in the main a religion of fear. Though some spirits were good, the bulk were evil, and all were capricious. Men were consequently all their lifetime subject to bondage, and love as a religious emotion was impossible. When the Semites came at a later time into the country their star-worship was amalgamated with this mere Shamanism of the Akkadians. In the new faith thus evolved the great gods of the Semites were arranged in a hierarchy, and the spirits, both good and evil, were subordinated to them. But even the great gods remain within the sphere of nature, and have in full measure the defects and limitations of nature-gods everywhere.[1] They are not entirely beneficent powers, nor are they even moral beings. Some have special delight in blood and destruction, while the cruel Semitic child-sacrifice was practised in honour of others. Again, their displeasure has no necessary or even general connection with sin. Their wrath is generally the outcome of mere arbitrary whim. Indeed it may be doubted whether the conception of sin or of moral guilt ever had a secure footing in this religion. It certainly had none in the terror-struck hymn to the seven evil spirits who are described thus :—

> "Seven (are) they, seven (are) they.
> Male they (are) not, female they (are) not;

[1] Meyer, p. 117.

Moreover the deep is their pathway.
Wife they have not, child is not born to them.
Law (and) order they know not,
Prayer and supplication hear they not.
Wicked (are) they, wicked (are) they."[1]

There is here an accent of genuine terror, which involved not love, but hatred. Even in what Sayce calls a "Penitential Psalm," and which he compares to the Biblical Psalms, there is nothing of the gratitude to God as a deliverer from sin which in Israel was the chief factor in producing the response to Yahweh's demand for the love of man. Morally, it contains nothing higher than is contained in the hymn of the spirits. The transgressions which are so pathetically lamented, and from the punishment of which deliverance is so earnestly sought, are purely ceremonial and involuntary. The author of the prayer conceives that he has to do with a god whose wrath is a capricious thing, coming upon men they know not why. So conceived God cannot be loved. It is entirely in accord with this that in the great flood epic no reason is given for the destruction of mankind save the caprice of Bel.[2] The few expressions quoted by Sayce from a hymn to the sun-god—such as this, "Merciful God, that liftest up the fallen, that supportest the weak. . . . Like a wife, thou submittest thyself, cheerful and kindly. . . . Men far and wide bow before thee and rejoice"—cannot avail to subvert a conclusion so

[1] Sayce, *Babylonian Literature*, p. 36. Both poems here referred to are pre-Assyrian, being found as translations in the library of Assurbanipal. But Assyrian religion made no progress; it seems to have remained always dependent on Babylonian, even in details.

[2] Meyer, p. 178. Cf. however Sayce, *The Higher Criticism and the Monuments*, p. 114. Sayce maintains that the Assyrian epic attributes the flood to the moral guilt of men. But that is by no means proved, for it is more than doubtful whether sin to the Assyrian was not always mainly a ceremonial matter.

firmly fixed. These are simply the ordinary expressions which the mere physical pleasure of the sunlight brings to the lips of sun-worshippers of all ages and of all climes. At best they could only be taken as germs out of which a loving relation between God and man might have been developed. But though they were ancient they never were developed. At the end as at the beginning the Assyrio-Babylonian religion moves on so low a level, even in its more innocent aspects, that a development like that in Deuteronomy is absolutely impossible. In its worse aspects Assyrian religion was unspeakable. The worship of Ishtar at Nineveh outdid everything known in the ancient world for lust and cruelty.

On this side too, therefore, we find no parallel to Israel's new outgrowth of higher religion. Comparison only makes it stand out more boldly in its splendid originality; and we are left with the fruitful question, "What was the root of the astonishing difference between Yahweh and every other god whom Israel had heard of?" Precisely at this time and under the same circumstances, the ethnic religions around Israel were developing away from any higher elements they had contained, and were thereby, as we know now, hastening to extinction. Under the inspired prophetic influence, Israel's religion turned the loss of the nation into gain; it rose by the darkness of national misfortune into a nobler phase than any it had previously known.

But perhaps the crowning merit of this demand for love of God is the emphasis it lays upon personality in both God and man, and the high level at which it conceives their mutual relations. From the first, of course, the personal element was always very strongly present in the Israelite conception of God. Indeed personality was the dominating idea among all the smaller nations which surrounded Israel. The national god was con-

ceived of mainly as a greater and more powerful man, full of the energetic self-assertion without which it would be impossible for any man to reign over an Eastern community. The Moabite stone shows this, for in it Chemosh is as sharply defined a person as Mesha himself. The Canaanite gods, therefore, might be wanting in moral character; their existence was doubtless thought of in a limited and wholly carnal manner; but there never was, apparently, the least tendency to obscure the sharp lines of their individuality. In Israel, *a fortiori*, such a tendency did not exist; and that a writer of Matthew Arnold's ability should have persuaded himself, and tried to persuade others, that under the name of Yahweh Israel understood anything so vague as his "stream of tendency which makes for righteousness," is only another instance of the extraordinarily blinding effects of a preconceived idea. So far from Yahweh being conceived in that manner, it would be much easier to prove that, whatever aberrations in the direction of making God merely "a non-natural man" may be charged upon Christianity, they have been founded almost exclusively upon Old Testament examples and Old Testament texts. If there was defect in the Old Testament conception of God, it was, and could not but be, in the direction of drawing Him down too much into the limits of human personality.

But though the gods were always thought of by the Canaanites as personal, their character was not conceived as morally high. Moral character in Chemosh, Moloch, or Baal was not of much importance, and their relations with their peoples were never conditioned by moral conduct. How deeply ingrained this view was in Palestine is seen in the persistency with which even Yahweh's relation to His people was viewed in this light. Only the continual outcry of the prophets against it prevented this idea becoming permanently dominant even

in Israel. Nay, it often deceived would-be prophets. Clinging to the idea of the national God, and forgetting altogether the ethical character of Yahweh, without, perhaps, conscious insincerity, they prophesied peace to the wicked, and so came to swell the ranks of the false prophets. But from very early times another thought was cherished by Israel's representative men in regard to their relations with God. Yahweh was righteous, and demanded righteousness in His people. Oblations were vain if offered as a substitute for this. All the prophets reach their greatest heights of sublimity in preaching this ethically noble doctrine; and the love to God which Deuteronomy demands is to be exhibited in reverent obedience to moral law.

Moreover, that God should seek or even need the love of man threw other light on the Old Testament religion. If, without revelation, Israel had widened its mental horizon so as to conceive Yahweh as Lord of the world, it may be questioned whether it could have kept clear of the gulf of pantheism. But by the manifestation of God in their special history, the Israelites had been taught to rise step by step to the higher levels, without losing their conception of Yahweh as the living, personal, active friend of their people. Moreover they had been early taught, as we have seen, that the deep design of all that was wrought for them was the good of all men. The love of God was seen pressing forward to its glorious and beneficent ends; and both by ascribing such far-reaching plans to Yahweh, and by affirming His interest in the fate of men, Israel's conception of the Divine personality was raised alike in significance and power; for anything more personal than love planning and working towards the happiness of its objects cannot be conceived. But the crown was set upon the Divine personality by the claim to the love of man. This signified

that to the Divine mind the individual man was not hid from God by his nation, that he was not for Him a mere specimen of a genus. Rather each man has to God a special worth, a special character, which, impelled by His free personal love, He seeks to draw to Himself. At every step each man has near him "the great Companion," who desires to give Himself to him. Nay, more, it implies that God seeks and needs an answering love; so that Browning's daring declaration, put into the mouth of God when the song of the boy Theocrite is no more heard, "I miss My little human praise," is simple truth.[1]

But if the demand illustrates and illuminates the personality of God, it throws out in a still more decisive manner the personality of man. In a rough sense, of course, there never could have been any doubt of that. But children have to grow into full self-determining personality, and savages never attain it. Both are at the mercy of caprice, or of the needs of the moment, to which they answer so helplessly that in general no consistent course of conduct can be expected of them. That can be secured only by rigorous self-determination. But the power of self-determination does not come at once, nor is acquired without strenuous and continued effort; it is, in fact, a power which in any full measure is possessed only by the civilised man. Now the Israelites were not highly civilised when they left Egypt. They were still at the stage when the tribe overshadowed and absorbed the individual, as it does to-day among the South Sea islanders. The progress of the prophetic thought towards the demand for personal love has already been traced. Here we must trace the steps by which the personal element in each individual was strengthened in Israel, till it was fit to respond to the Divine demand.

[1] Browning's Poems, "The Boy and the Angel."

The high calling of the people reacted on the individual Israelites. They saw that in many respects the nations around them were inferior to them. Much that was tolerated or even respected among them was an abomination to Israel; and every Israelite felt that the honour of his people must not be dragged in the dust by him, as it would be if he permitted himself to sink to the heathen level. Further, the laws regarding even ceremonial holiness which in germ certainly, and probably in considerable extension also, existed from the earliest time, made him feel that the sanctity of the nation depended upon the care and scrupulosity of the individual. And then there were the individual spiritual needs, which could not be suppressed and would not be denied. Though one sees so little explicit provision for restoration of individual character in early Yahwism, yet in the course of time—who can doubt it?—the personal religious needs of so many individual men would necessarily frame for themselves some outlet. Building upon the analogy of the relation established between Yahweh and Israel, they would hope for the satisfaction of their individual needs through the infinite mercy of God. The Psalms, such of them as can fairly be placed in the pre-Deuteronomic time, bear witness to this; and those written after that time show a hopefulness, and a faith in the reality of individual communion with God which show that such communion was not then a new discovery.

In all these ways the religious life of the individual was being cultivated and strengthened; but this demand made in Deuteronomy lifts that indirect refreshment of soul, for which the cultus and the covenants made no special provision, into a recognised position, nay, into the central position in Israelite religion. The word, "Thou shalt love Yahweh thy God," confirmed and justified all these persistent efforts after individual life

in God, and brought them out into the large place which belongs to aspirations that have at last been authorised. By a touch, the inspired writer transformed the pious hopes of those who had been the chosen among the chosen people into certainties. Each man was henceforth to have his own direct relation to God as well as the nation; and the national hope, which had hitherto been first, was now to depend for its realisation upon the fulfilment of the special and private hope. Thus the old relation was entirely reversed by Deuteronomy. Instead of the individual holding "definite place in regard to Yahweh only through his citizenship," now the nation has its place and its future secured only by the personal love of each citizen to God. For that is obviously what the demand here made really means. Again and again the inspired writer returns to it; and his persistent endeavour is to connect all else that his book contains—warning, exhortation, legislation—with this as the foundation and starting-point. Here, as elsewhere, we can trace the roots of the new covenant which Jeremiah and Ezekiel saw afar off and rejoiced at, and which our blessed Lord has realised for us. The individual religious life is for the first time fully recognised for what ever since it has been seen to be, the first condition of any attempt to realise the kingdom of God in the life of a nation.

And not only thus does our text emphasise individuality. Love with all the heart, and all the mind, and all the soul is possible only to a fully developed personality; for, as Rothe says, "We love only in the measure in which personality is developed in us. Even God can love only in so far as He is personal."[1] Or, as Julius Muller says in his *Doctrine of Sin*, "The association of personal beings in love, while it involves the most perfect distinction of the I

[1] *Theol., Ethik* i., p. 515.

and Thou, proves itself to be the highest form of unity."[1] Unless other counteracting circumstances come in, therefore, the more highly developed individuality is, the more entirely human beings are determined from within, the more entirely will union among men depend upon free and deliberate choice, and the more perfect will it be. In being called to love God men are dealt with as those who have attained to complete self-determination, who have come to completed manhood in the moral life. For all that could mix love with alloy, mere sensuous sympathy, and the insistent appeal of that which is materially present, are wanting here. Here nothing is involved but the free outgoing of the heart to that which is best and highest; nothing but loyalty to that vision of Good which, amid all the ruin sin has wrought in human nature, dominates us so that "we needs must love the highest when we see it." The very demand is a promise and a prophecy of completed moral and religious liberty to the individual soul. It rests upon the assurance that men have at last been trained to walk alone, that the support of social life and external ordinances has become less necessary than it was, and that one day a new and living way of access to the Father will bring every soul into daily intercourse with the source of all spiritual life.

But this demand, in affirming personality of so high a kind, also re-created duty. Under the national dispensation the individual man was a *servant*. To a large extent he knew not what his Lord did, and he ruled his life by the commands he received without understanding, or perhaps caring to understand, their ultimate ground and aim. Much too of what he thus laid upon himself was mere ancient custom, which had been a protection to national and moral life in early days, but which had

[1] *Doctrine of Sin*, vol i., p. 114.

survived, or was on the point of surviving, its usefulness. Now, however, that man was called upon to love God with all his heart and mind and soul, the step was taken which was to end in his becoming the consciously free *son* of God. For to love in this fashion means, on the one hand, a willingness to enter into communion with God and to seek that communion; and on the other it implies a throwing open of the soul to receive the love which God so persistently has pressed upon men. In such a relation slavery, blind or constrained obedience, disappears, and the motives of right action become the purest and most powerful that man can know.

In the first place, selfishness dies out. Those to whom God has given Himself have no more to seek. They have reached the dwelling "of peace imperturbable," and know that they are secure. Nothing that they do can win more for them; and they do those things that please God with the free, uncalculating, ungrudging forgetfulness of self, which distinguishes those fortunate children who have grown up into a perfect filial love. Of course it was only the elect in Israel who in any great degree realised this ideal. But even those who neglected it had for a moment been illuminated by it; and the record of it remained to kindle the nobler hearts of every generation. Even the legalism of later days could not obscure it. In the case of many it bore up and transfigured the dry details of Judaism, so that even amid such surroundings the souls of men were kept alive. The later Psalms prove this beyond dispute, and the advanced view which brings the bulk of the Psalter down to the post-exilic period only emphasises the more this aspect of pre-Christian Judaism. In Christianity of course the ideal was made infinitely more accessible: and it received in the Pauline doctrine, the Evangelical doctrine, of Justification by Faith a form, which more than any other human

teaching has made unselfish devotion to God a common aim. It would hardly be too much to say that those philosophical and religious systems which have preached the unworthiness of looking for a reward of well-doing, which have striven to set up the doing of good for its own sake as the only morality worthy of the name, have failed, just because they would not begin with the love of God. To Christianity, especially to Evangelical Christianity, they have assumed to speak from above downwards; but it alone has the secret they strove in vain to learn. Men justified by faith have peace with God, and do good with passionate fervour without hope or possibility of further reward, just because of their love and gratitude to God, who is the source of all good. This plan has succeeded, and no other has; for to teach men on any other terms to disregard reward is simply to ask them to breathe in a vacuum.

In the second place, those who rose to the height of this calling had duty not only deepened but extended. It was natural that they should not seek to throw off the obligations of worship and morality as they had been handed down by their ancestors. Only an authoritative voice which they were separated from by centuries could say, "It hath been said by them of old time, . . . but *I* say unto you"; and men would be disposed rather to fulfil old obligations with new zeal, while they added to them the new duties which their widened horizon had brought into view. It is true that in course of time the Pharisaic spirit laid hold of the Jews, and that by it they were led back into a slavery which quite surpassed the half-conscious bondage of their earlier time. It is one of the mysteries of human nature that it is only the few who can live for any time at a high level, and hold the balance between extremes. The many cannot choose but follow those few; and the dumb, half-reluctant, half-

fascinated way in which they are drawn after them is a most pathetic thing to see. But too often they avenge themselves for the pressure put upon them, by taking up the teaching they receive in a perverted or mutilated form, dropping unawares the very soul of it, and suiting it to the average man. When that is done the bread from heaven becomes a stone; the message of liberty is turned into a summons to the prison house; and the darkness becomes of that opaque sort which is found only where the light within men is darkness. That tragedy was enacted in Judaism as rarely elsewhere. The free service of sons was exchanged for the timorous, anxious scrupulosity of the formalist. How could men love a God whom they pictured as inexorable in claiming the mint and cummin of ceremonial worship, and as making life a burden for all who had a conscience? They could not, and they did not. Most substituted a merely formal compliance with the externalities of worship for the love to God and man which was the presupposition of the true Israelite's life, and the mass of the nation fell away from true faith. Strangely enough, therefore, the strength of men's love for God, and of their belief in His love, gave an impulse to the legalistic Pharisaism which our Lord denounced as the acme of loveless irreligion.

But it was not so perverted in all. There always was an Israel within Israel that refused to let go the truths they had learned, and kept up the succession of men inspired by the free spirit of God. Even among the Pharisees there were such—witness St. Paul—men who, though they were entangled in the formalism of their time, found it at last a pedagogue to bring them unto Christ. We must believe therefore that at the beginning the attainment marked by the demands of Deuteronomy and the Law of Holiness existed and was carried over into the daily life. As the national limits of religion were

broken down, the word "neighbour" received an ever wider definition in Israel. At first only a man's fellow-tribesman or fellow-countryman was included; then the stranger; later, as in Jonah's picture of the conduct of the sailors, it was hinted that even among the heathen brethren might be found. Finally, in our Lord's parable of the Good Samaritan the last barrier was broken down. But it needed all St. Paul's lifework, and the first and most desperate inner conflict Christianity had to live through, to initiate men into anything like the full meaning of what Christ had taught. Then it was seen that as there was but one Father in heaven, so there was but one family on earth. Then too, though the merely ceremonial duties by which the Jew had been bound ceased to be binding on Christians, the sphere for the practice of moral duty was immensely widened. Indeed, had it not been for the free, joyous spirit with which they were inspired by Christ, they must have shrunk from the immensity of their obligation. For not only were men's neighbours infinitely more numerous now, but their relations with them became vastly more complicated. To meet all possible cases that might arise in the great and elaborate civilisations Christianity had to face and save, our Lord deepened the meaning of the commandments; and so far from Christians being free from the obligation to law, immeasurably more was demanded of them. To them first was the full sweep of moral obligation revealed, for they first had reached the full moral stature of men in Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER VIII

EDUCATION—MOSAIC VIEW

DEUT. vi. 6–25

THOSE great verses, Deut. vi. 4, 5, form the central truth of the book. Everything else in it proceeds from and is informed by them, and they are dwelt upon and enforced with a clear perception of their radical importance. There is something of the joy of discovery in the way in which the unity of Yahweh and exclusive love to Him are insisted upon, not only in verses 6-25 of this chapter, but in xi. 13-20. The same strongly worded demand to lay to heart Yahweh's command to love Him and Him only, and to teach it strenuously to their children—to make it "a sign upon their hand," and "as a frontlet between their eyes"—is found in both passages. It is worthy of remark also that nearly the same words are found in Exod. xiii. 9, 16. Presumably on a count of this, some have ascribed that section of Exodus to the author of Deuteronomy. But both Dillmann and Driver ascribe these passages to J and E, and with good reason. Indeed, apart from the purely literary grounds for thinking that these formulas were first used by the earlier writers and were copied by the author of Deuteronomy, another line of argument points in the same direction. In Exodus the thing to be remembered and taught to the children was the meaning

and origin of the Passover and the consecration of the firstborn, *i.e.* the meaning and origin of some of their ritual institutions. Here in Deuteronomy, on the contrary, that which is to be written on the heart and taught to the children is moral and spiritual truth about God, and love to God. Now the probable explanation of this likeness and difference is, not that the author of Deuteronomy, after using this insistive phrase only of high spiritual truths in his own book, inserted it in Exodus with regard to mere institutions of the cultus; rather, the writers of Exodus had used it of that which was important in their day, and the Deuteronomist borrowed it from them to emphasise his own most cherished revelation. In the earlier stages of a religious movement, the establishment of institutions which shall embody and perpetuate religious truth, is one of the first necessities. It has become a commonplace of Christian defence, for example, that Baptism and the Lord's Supper were made the most successful vehicles for conveying fundamental Christian truth, and that the celebration of these two rites from the first days even until now is one of the most convincing proofs of the continuity of Christianity. Naturally, therefore, the establishment of the Passover was specially marked out as the *palladium* of Israelite religion in the earlier days. But in the time after Isaiah, when Deuteronomy was written, the institutions needed no longer such insistence. They had indeed become so important to the people that the mere observance of them threatened to become a substitute for religious and even moral feeling. The Deuteronomist's great message was, consequently, a reiteration of the prophetic truths as to the supremacy of the spiritual; and for the object of the warm exhortation of the earlier writings he substituted the proclamation of Yahweh's oneness, and of His demand for His people's love. This

seems a reasonable and probable explanation of the facts as we find them. If true, it is a proof that the need of ritual institutions, and the danger of unduly exalting them, was not peculiar to post-exilic times. In principle the temptation was always present; and as living faith rose and fell it came into operation, or was held in abeyance, throughout the whole of Israel's history. Hence the mention of this kind of formalism or the denunciation of it must be very cautiously used as a criterion by which to date any Scriptural writings.

It is therefore with a full consciousness of its fundamental importance that the author of Deuteronomy follows the great passage chapter vi. 4, 5, with this solemn and inspiring exhortation. It is from no mere itch for religious improvement of the occasion that he presses home his message thus. Nor is it love for the mere repetition of an ancient formula of exhortation that dictates its use. He knew and understood the work of Moses, and felt that the moulding power in Israel's life as a nation, the unifying element in it, had been the religion of Yahweh. Whatever else may have been called in question, it has never been doubted that the salt which kept the political and social life of the people from rotting through many centuries was the always advancing knowledge of God. At each great crisis of Israel's history the religion of Yahweh had met the demands for direction, for inspiration, for uplifting which were made upon it. With Protean versatility it had adapted itself to every new condition. In all circumstances it had provided a lamp for the feet and a light for the path of the faithful; and in meeting the needs of generation after generation it had revealed elements of strength and consolation which, without the commentary of experience, could never have been brought out. Now the author of Deuteronomy felt that in these short sentences

the high-water mark of Israelite religion so far had been reached, and that in renewing the work of Moses, and adapting it to his own time, the principles here enunciated must be the main burden of his message. Further progress depended, he obviously felt, upon the absorption and assimilation of these truths by his people, and he felt he must provide for the perpetuation of them in that better time he was preparing for. This he did by providing for the religious education of the young. Whatever else Israel had gained it had been careful to hand on from generation to generation. The land flowing with milk and honey was still in the possession of the descendants of the first conquerors. The literature, the science, the wisdom that the fathers had gathered, had been carefully passed down to the children; and a precious deposit of enriching experience in the form of history had reached to the elect even among the common people, as the example of Amos shows. But the most valuable heritage of Israel was that continually growing deposit of religious truth which had been the life-blood of its master spirits. From generation to generation the noblest men in the nation, those most sensitive to the touch of the Divine, had been casting soundings into the great deep of the hidden purposes of God. With sore travail of both mind and spirit, they had found solutions of the great problems which no living soul can escape. These were no doubt more or less partial, but they were sufficient for their day, and were always in the line of the final answer. As the sum of experience widened, the scope of the solutions widened also, and in the course of Providence these issued in a conception of God which elsewhere was never approached. This of all national treasures was the most priceless, and to preserve and hand on this was simply to keep the national soul alive. Compared with this, every other heritage from the past was as nothing; and so,

with a simple directness which must amaze the legislators of modern states, the inspired lawgiver arranged for a religious education.

To him, as to all ancient lawgivers, a commonwealth without religion was simply inconceivable, and the hampering, confusing, and confused difficulties of to-day lay far beyond his horizon. Parents must take over this great heritage and lay it deeply to heart. They must then make it the subject of their common talk. They must write the profound words which summed it up upon the doorposts of their houses. They must let it fill their minds at their down-sitting and their uprising, and while they walked by the way. Further, as the crown of their work, they were to teach it diligently to their children, already accustomed by their parents' continual interest to regard this as the worthiest object of human thought. But though the parents were to be the chief instructors of children in religion, the State or the community was also to do its part. As the private citizen was to write, "Hear, O Israel: Yahweh our God is one Yahweh; and thou shalt love Yahweh thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might," on the posts of his door, so the representatives of the community were to write them upon the town or village gates. In those early days schools were unknown, as State-regulated schools are still unknown in all purely Eastern countries. Consequently there was no sphere for the State in the direct religious teaching of the young. But so far as it could act, the State was to act. It was to commit itself to the religious principles that underlay the life of the people, and to proclaim them with the utmost publicity. It was to secure that none should be ignorant of them, so far as proclamation by writing in the most public place could secure knowledge, for on this the very existence of the State depended.

But the religious instruction was not to be limited to the reiteration of these great sentences; in that case they would have become a mere form of words. In the last verses of the chapter, vv. 20-25, we find a model of the kind of explanatory comment which was to be given in addition: "When thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which Yahweh our God hath commanded you? then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in the land of Egypt; and Yahweh brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand," and so on. That means that the *history* of Yahweh's dealings with His people was to be taught, to show the reasonableness of the Divine commands, to exhibit the love-compelling character of God. And this was entirely in accord with the Biblical conception of God. Neither here nor elsewhere in the Old Testament are there any abstract definitions of His character, His spirituality, His omnipresence, or His omnipotence. Nor is there anywhere any argument to prove His existence. All that is postulated, presupposed, as that which all men believe, except those who have wilfully perverted themselves. But the existence of God with all these great and necessary attributes is undoubtedly implied in what is narrated of Yahweh's dealings with His people. As we have seen, too, the very name of Yahweh implies that His nature should not be limited by any definition. He was what He would prove Himself to be, and throughout the Old Testament the *gesta Dei* through and for the Israelites, and the prophetic promises made in Yahweh's name, represented all that was known of God. This gave a peculiarly healthy and robust tone to Old Testament piety. The subjective, introspective element which in modern times is so apt to take the upper hand, was kept in due subordination by making history the main

nourishment of religious thought. In constant contact with external fact, Israelite piety was simple, sincere, and practical; and men's thoughts being turned away from themselves to the Divine action in the world, they were less touched by the disease of self-consciousness than modern believers in God. In every sphere of human life, too, they looked for God, and traced the working of His hand. The later distinction between the sacred and secular parts of life, which has been often pushed to disastrous extremes, was to them unknown. For these among many other reasons, the Old Testament must always remain of vital importance to the Church of God. It can fall into neglect only when the religious life is becoming unhealthy and one-sided.

Further, its qualities especially fit it for use in the education of children. In many respects a child's mind resembles the mind of a primitive people. It has the same love of concrete examples, the same incapacity to appreciate abstract ideas, and it has the same susceptibility to such reasoning as this: God has been very loving and gracious to men, especially to our forefathers, and we are therefore bound to love Him and to obey Him with reverence and fear. To the children of a primitive people such teaching would therefore be doubly suitable; but the Deuteronomist's anxiety in regard to it has been justified by its results in times no longer primitive. Through ages of persecution and oppression, often amid a social environment of the worst sort, there has been little or no wavering in the fundamental points of Jewish faith. Scattered and peeled, slaughtered and decimated, as they have been through blood-stained centuries, this nation have held fast to their religion. Not even the fact that, through their refusal to accept their Messiah when He came, the most tender, the most expansive, the most highly spiritual elements of the Old Testament religion have escaped

them, has been able to neutralise the benefit of the truth they have so tenaciously held. Of non-Christian nations they stand by far the highest; and among the orthodox Jews who still keep firm to the national traditions, and teach the ancient Scriptures diligently to their children, there is often seen a piety and a confidence in God, a submission and a hopefulness which put to shame many who profess to have hope in Christ. Even in our day, when agnosticism and denial of the supernatural is eating into Judaism more than into almost any other creed,[1] a book like Friedländer's *The Jewish Religion* gives us a very favourable idea of the spirit and teachings of orthodox Judaism. And its main stay is, and always has been, the religious training of the young. "In obedience to the precept 'Thou shalt speak of them,' *i.e.* of 'the words which I command thee this day,'" says Friedländer, "'when thou liest down and when thou risest up,' three sections of the law are read daily, in the morning and in the evening, viz. (1) Deut. vi. 4-9, beginning 'Hear'; (2) Deut. xi. 13-21, beginning 'And it shall be if ye diligently hearken'; (3) Numb. xv. 37-41, beginning 'And the Lord said.' The first section teaches the unity of God, and our duty to love this one God with all our heart, to make His word the subject of our constant meditation and to instil it into the heart of the young. The second section contains the lesson of reward and punishment, that our success depends on our obedience to the will of God. This important truth must constantly be kept before our eyes, and before the eyes of our children. The third section contains the commandments of Tsitsith, the object of which is to remind us of God's precepts." To-day, therefore, as so many centuries

[1] *Jewish Quarterly Review*, October 1888, p. 55, where Professor Schechter finds himself compelled to discuss the question whether a man may be a good Jew and yet deny the existence of God.

ago, these great words are uttered daily in the ears of all pious Jews, and they are as potent to keep them steady to their faith now as they were then. For in most cases where a drift towards the fashionable agnosticism of the day or to atheistic materialism is observable among Jews, it will be found to have been preceded either by neglect or formalism in regard to this fundamental matter. Briefly, without this teaching they cease to be Jews; with it they remain steadfast as a rock. Uprooted as they are from their country, their national coherence endures and seems likely to endure till their set time has come. So triumphantly has the enforcement of religious education vindicated itself in the case of God's ancient people.

In the remaining verses of the chapter, vv. 10-19, we have a warning against neglect and forgetfulness of their God, and an indication of the circumstances under which it would be most difficult to remain true to Him. These are uttered entirely from the Mosaic standpoint, and are among the passages which it is most difficult to reconcile with the later authorship; for there would appear to be no motive for the later writer to go back upon the exceptional circumstances of the early days in Canaan. His object must have been to warn and guide and instruct the people of *his* time in the face of their difficulties and temptations, to adapt Mosaic legislation and Mosaic teaching to the needs of his own day. Now on any supposition he must have written when all conquest on Israel's part had long ceased. It is most probable too that in his day the prosperity of his people was on the wane. They were not looking forward to a time of special temptation from riches; rather they were dreading expatriation and decay. Consequently this reference to the ease with which they became rich by occupying the cities and villages and farms of those they had conquered is quite out of place, unless we are to regard the author as a skilled and artistic writer

who deliberately set himself to reproduce in all respects the mind and thoughts of a man of an earlier day, as Thackeray, for instance, does in his *Henry Esmond.* But that is not credible; and the explanation is that given in Chapter I., that the addresses here attributed to Moses are free reproductions of earlier traditions or narratives concerning what Moses actually said. If we know anything about Moses at all, it is in the highest degree probable that he left his people some parting charge. He longed to pass the Jordan with them. He could not fail to see that an immense revolution in their habits and manner of life was certain to occur when they entered the promised land. That must have appeared to him fraught with varied dangers, and words of warning and instructions would rush even unbidden to his lips.

There can be no doubt, at any rate, that this passage is true to human nature in regarding the sudden acquirement of great and goodly cities which they did not build, and houses full of good things which they filled not, and cisterns hewn out which they did not hew, vineyards and olive trees which they did not plant, as a great temptation to forgetfulness of God. At all times prosperity, especially if it come suddenly, and without being won by previous toil and self-denial, has tended to deteriorate character. When men have no changes or vicissitudes, then they fear not God. It is for help in trouble when the help of man is vain, or for a deliverance in danger, that average men most readily turn to God. But when they feel fairly safe, when they have raised themselves, as they think, "beyond all storms of chance," when they have built up between themselves and poverty or failure a wall of wealth and power, then the impulse that drives them upward ceases to act. It becomes strangely pleasant, and it seems safe, to get rid of the strain of living at the highest attainable level, and with a sigh of relief

men stretch themselves out to rest and to enjoy. These are the average men; but there are some in every age, the elect, who have had the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, who have had such real and intimate communion with God that separation from Him would turn all other joys into mockery. They cannot yield to this temptation as most do, and in the midst of wealth and comfort keep alive their aspirations. In Israel these two classes existed; and to the former, *i.e.* to the great bulk of both rulers and people, the stimulus administered by the conquest to the material side of their nature must have been potent indeed.

It is here implied that the Israelite people when they entered Canaan had some moral education to lose. Whether that could be so is the question asked by many critics, and their answer is an emphatic No. They were, say they, a rude, desert people, without settled habits of life, without knowledge of agriculture, and possessed of a religion which in all outward respects was scarcely, if at all, higher than that of the surrounding nations. What happened to them in Canaan, therefore, was not a lapse, but a rise. They advanced from being a wandering pastoral people to become settled agriculturists. They gained knowledge of the arts of life by their contact with the Canaanites, and they lost little or nothing in religion; for they were themselves only image-worshippers and looked upon Yahweh as on a level with the Canaanite Baals. But if the Decalogue belongs, in any form, to that early time, and if the character of Moses be in any degree historical, then, of course, this mode of view is false. Then Israel worshipped a spiritual God, who was the guardian of morals; and there was in the mind of their leader and legislator a light which illuminated every sphere of life, both private and national. Consequently there could be a falling away from a higher

level of religious life, as the Scriptures consistently say there was. Without perhaps having understood and made their own the fundamental truths of Yahwism, the people had had their whole social and political life remodelled in accordance with its principles. They had, moreover, had time to learn something of its inner meaning, and in forty years we may well believe that the more spiritually minded among them had become imbued with the higher religious spirit. Add to that the union, the movement, the excitement of a successful advance, crowned by conquest, and we have all the elements of a revived religious and national life among Eastern people.

Similar causes have produced precisely similar effects since. In important respects the origin of Mohammedanism repeats the same story. A semi-nomadic people, divided into clans and tribes, related by blood but never united, were unified by a great religious idea vastly in advance of any they had hitherto known. The religious reformer who proclaimed this truth, and those who belonged to the inner circle of his friends and counsellors, were turned from many evils, and exhibited a moral force and enthusiasm corresponding, in some degree at least, to the sublimity of the religious doctrine they had embraced. The masses, on their part, received and submitted to a revised and improved scheme of social life. Then they moved forward to conquest, and in their first days not only trampled down opposition, but deserved to do so, for in most respects they were superior to the ignorant and degraded Christians they overthrew. They came out of the desert, and were at first soldiers only. But in a generation or two they largely settled to purely agricultural life, as landowners for whom the native population laboured; and they gained in knowledge of the arts of life from the more civilised peoples they conquered. But in

religious and moral character imitations of the conquered peoples involved, for the conquerors, a loss. And soon they did lose. The violence accompanying successful war produced arrogance and injustice; the immense wealth thrown into their hands so suddenly gave rise to luxury and greed. Within twenty-five years from the flight of Mohammed from Mecca, relaxation of manners manifested itself. Sensuality and drunkenness were rife; with Ali's death the Caliphate passed into the hands of Muawia, the leader of the still half-heathen part of the Koreish; and the secular indifferent portion of Mohammed's followers ruled in Islam.[1]

Allowing all that can be allowed for exceptional influences in Israel, we may well believe that the circumstances of the first invaders were such as would strain the influence of the higher religion upon the nation. And after the conquest and settlement the strain would necessarily be greater still. Whatever drawbacks warfare may have, it at least keeps men active and hardy, but the rest of a conqueror after warfare is a temptation to luxury and corruption which has been very rarely resisted. Even to-day, when men enter upon new and vacant lands, and that without war and under Christian influences, the plenty which the first immigrants soon gather about them proves adverse to higher thought. In America in its earlier days, and in new American territories and Australia now, our civilisation at that stage always takes a materialistic turn. Every man may hope to become rich, the resources of the country are so great and those who are to share them are so few. In order to develop them, all concerned must give their time and thoughts to the work, and must

[1] For an illustration of the way in which land-hunger and the rush to satisfy it operates on men, see the account of "The Invasion of Oklahoma" (a territory lately thrown open to occupation in the United States), *Spectator*, April 27th 1889.

become absorbed in it. The result is that, though the religious instinct asserts itself in sufficient strength to lead to the building of churches and schools, and men are too busy to be much influenced by theoretical unbelief, yet the pulse of religion beats feebly and low. The feeling spreads, under many disguises it is true, but still it spreads, that a man's life does "consist in the abundance of the things which he possesseth"; and the heroic element of Christianity, the impulse to self-sacrifice, falls into the background. The result is a social life respectable enough, save that the social blots due to self-indulgence are a good deal more conspicuous than they should be; a very high average of general comfort, with its necessary drawback of a self-satisfied and somewhat ignoble contentment; and a religious life that prides itself mainly in avoiding the falsehood of extremes. In such an atmosphere true and living religion has great difficulty in asserting itself. Each individual is drawn away from the region of higher thought more powerfully than in the older lands where ambitions are for most men less plausible; and so the struggle to keep the soul sensitive to spiritual influences is more hard. As for the national life, public affairs in those circumstances tend to be ruled simply by the standard of immediate expediency, and strenuousness of principle or practice tends to be regarded as an impossible ideal.

To all this Israel was exposed, and to more. There are doubts as to the extent of their conquests when they settled down; but there are none that when they did so they still had heathen Canaanites among them. Throughout almost the whole country the population was mixed, and constant intercourse with the conquered peoples was unavoidable. At first these were either Israel's teachers in many of the arts of settled life, or they must have carried on the work of agriculture for their Israelite

lords. Moreover many of the sacred places of the land the sanctuaries which from time immemorial had been resorted to for worship, were either taken over by the Israelites or were left in Canaanite hands. In either case they opened a way for malign influences upon the purer faith. Gradually, too, the tribal feeling asserted itself. The tribal heads regained the position they had held before the domination of Moses and his successor, just as the tribal heads of the Arabs asserted themselves after the death of Mohammed and his immediate successors, and plunged into fratricidal war with the companions of their prophet. The only difference was that, while the circumstances of the Arabs compelled them to retain a supreme head, the circumstances of the Israelites permitted them to fall back into the tribal isolation from which they had emerged. The national life was broken up, the religious life followed in the same path, until, as the Book of Judges graphically says in narrating how Micah set up an Ephod and Teraphim for himself and made his son a priest, "every man did that which was right in his own eyes." With a people so recently won for a higher faith, there could not but follow a recrudescence of heathen or semi-heathen beliefs and practices.

To sum up, given a great truth revealed to one man, which, though accepted by a nation, is only half understood by the bulk of them, and given also a great national deliverance and expansion brought about by the same leader, you have there the elements of a great enthusiasm with the seeds of its own decay within it. Such a nation especially if plied with external temptation, will fall back not into its first state certainly, but into a condition much below its highest level, so soon as the leader and those who had really comprehended the new truth are removed to a distance or are dead.

In the case of Mohammedanism this was instinctively felt. We find the Governor of Bassorah writing thus to Omar, the third Khalif: "Thou must strengthen my hands with a company of the Companions of the Prophet, for verily they are as salt in the midst of the people."[1] The same thing is expressly asserted of Israel also by the later editor in Josh. xxiv. 31: "And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, and had known all the work of the Lord, that He had wrought for Israel." It would almost seem as if Semitic peoples were specially liable to such oscillations, if Palgrave's account of the people of Nejed before the rise of the Wahabbis in the middle of last century can be trusted. "Almost every trace of Islam," he says,[2] "had long since vanished from Nejed, where the worship of the Djann, under the spreading foliage of large trees, or in the cavernous recesses of Djebel Toweyk, along with the invocation of the dead and sacrifices at their tombs, was blended with remnants of old Sabæan superstition. The Coran was unread, the five daily prayers forgotten, and no one cared where Mecca lay, east or west, north or south; tithes, ablutions, and pilgrimages were things unheard of."[3] If that was the state of things in a country exposed to no extraneous influences after a thousand years of Islam, we may well believe that the state of Israel in the

[1] *The Caliphate*, by Sir William Muir, p. 185.

[2] *Central and Eastern Arabia*, vol. i., p. 373.

[3] This shows how precarious the fundamental principle of much new criticism is. The non-observance of rites laid down as Divine commands, and the appearance of ancient superstitions such as the worship of the dead at any period, are held sufficient in the history of Israel to prove that monotheism did not then exist, and that ancestor-worship was then the prevailing cult. If applied to Islam that principle would lead to utterly false conclusions. Is there any reason for thinking that it may not give similar results when applied to the history of Israel?

time of the Judges was a fall from a better state religiously as well as politically. Looking to the future, Moses might well foresee the danger; and looking back the author of Deuteronomy would have reasons, many of them now unknown, for knowing that what was feared had occurred.

It is striking to see that both know but one security against such lapses in the life of a nation, and that is education. Nowadays we are inclined to ask if this was not a delusion on their part. The boundless faith in education as a moral, religious, and national restorative which filled men's minds in the early part of this century, has given place to disquieting questions as to whether it can do anything so high. Many begin to doubt whether it does more than restrain men from the worst crimes, by pointing out their consequences. And in the case of ordinary secular education that doubt is only too well founded. But it was not mere secular education the Old Testament relied on. Reading, writing, and arithmetic, valuable as these are as gateways to knowledge, were not in its view at all. What it was felt necessary to do was to keep alive an ideal view of life; and that was done by pouring into the young the history of their people, with the best that their highest minds had learned and thought of God. The demand is that parents shall first of all give themselves up to the love of God, without any reserve, and then that they shall teach this diligently to their children as the substance of the Divine demand upon *them*. Evidently by the words, "Thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down and when thou risest up," it is meant that the truth about God and the thought of God should be a subject on which conversation naturally turned, and to which it gladly returned continually Words about these things

were to flow from a genuine delighted interest in them, which made speech a necessity and a joy. Further, parents were to meet the *naïve* and questioning curiosity of their children as to the meaning of religious and moral ordinances of their people, with grave and extended teaching as to the work of God among them in the past. They were to point out, vv. 21-25, all the grace of God, and to show them that the statutes, which to young and undisciplined minds might seem a heavy burden, were really God's crowning mercy: they marked out the lines upon which alone good could come to man: they were the directions of a loving guide anxious to keep their feet from paths of destruction, "for their good always." Such education as this might prove adequate to overcome even stronger temptations than those to which Israel was exposed. For see what it means. It means that all the garnered religious thought and emotion of past generations, which the experiences of life and the felt presence of God in them had borne in upon the deepest minds of Israel, was to be made the bounding horizon for the opening mind of every Israelite child. When the child looked beyond the desires of its physical nature, it was to see this great sight, this panorama of the grace of Yahweh. To compensate for the restrictions which the Decalogue puts upon the natural impulses, Yahweh was to be held up to every child as an object of love, no desire after which could be excessive. Love to Yahweh, drawn out by what He had shown Himself to be, was to turn the energies of the young soul outward, away from self, and direct them to God, who works and is the sum of all good. Obviously those upon whom such education had its perfect work would never be fettered by the material aspects of things. Their horizon could never be so darkened that the twilight gods worshipped by the Canaanites should seem to them more than dim and

vanishing shadows. Every evil, incident to their circumstances as conquerors, would fall innocuous at their feet.

The instrument put into the hands of Israel was, viewed ideally, quite adequate for the work it had to do. But the history of Israel shows that the effort to keep Yahweh continually present to the mind of the people failed; and the question arises, why did it fail? If, as we have every reason to believe, the main tendencies of human nature then were what they are now, the first cause of failure would be with the parents. Many, probably the most of them, would observe to do all that Moses commanded, but they would do it without themselves keeping alive their spiritual life. Wherever that was the case, though the prayers should be scrupulously rehearsed, though the religious talk should be increasing, though the instruction about the past should be exact and regular, the highest results of it all would cease to appear. The best that would be done would be to keep alive knowledge of what the fathers had told them. The worst would be to render the child's mind so familiar with all aspects of the truth, and with all the phases of religious emotion, that throughout life this would always seem a region already explored, and in which no water for the thirsty soul had been found.

But in the children, too, there would be fatal hindrances. One would almost expect, *a priori*, that when one generation had won in trial and hardship and conquest a fund of moral and spiritual wisdom, their children would be able to take it to themselves, and would start from the point their fathers had attained. But in experience that is not found to be so. The fathers may have gained a sane and strong manhood through the training and teaching of Divine Providence, but their children do not start from the level their fathers have gained. They begin with the same passions, and evil tendencies, and illusions, as their

fathers began with, and against these they have to wage continual war. Above all, each soul for itself must take the great step by which it turns from evil to good. No rise in the general level of life will ever enable men to dispense with that. The will must determine itself morally by a free choice, and the Divine grace must play its part, before that union with God which is the heart of all religion can be brought about. No mechanical keeping up of good habits or fairer forms of social life can do much at this crucial point; and so each generation finds that there is no discharge in the war to which it is committed. As in all wars, many fall; sometimes the battle goes sorely against the kingdom of God, and the majority fall. The strength and beauty of a whole generation turns to the world and away from God, and the labours and prayers of faithful men and women who have taught them seem to be in vain.

The method of warding off evil by even high religious education is consequently very imperfect and uncertain in its action. Nevertheless this relative uncertainty is bound up with the very nature of moral influence and moral agency. Professor Huxley, in a famous passage of one of his addresses, says that if any being would offer to wind him up like a clock, so that he should always do what is right, and think what is true, he would close with the offer, and make no mourning about his moral freedom. Probably this was only a vehement way of expressing a desire for righteousness in deed, and truth in thought, somewhat pathetic in such a man. But if we are to take it literally, it is a singularly unwise declaration. The longing which gives pathos to the professor's words would on his hypothesis be a lunacy; for in the realm of morals mechanical compulsion has no meaning. Even God must give room to His creature, that he may exercise the spiritual freedom with which he is endowed.

Even God, we may say without irreverence, must sometimes fail in that which He seeks to accomplish, in the field of moral life. Philosophically speaking, perhaps, this statement cannot be defended. But it is not the Absolute of Philosophy which can touch the hearts and draw the love of men. It is the living, personal God, of whom we gain our best working conception by boldly transferring to Him the highest categories predicable of our humanity. He is, doubtless, much more than we; but we can only ascribe to Him our own best and highest. When we have done that we have approached Him as near as we can ever do. The Scriptural writers, therefore, have no pedantic scruples in their speech about God. They constantly represent Him as pleading with men, desiring to influence them, and yet sometimes as being driven back defeated by the obstinate sin of man. The Bible is full of the failures of God in this sense; and God's greatest failure, that which forms the burden and inspires the pathos of the bulk of the Old Testament, is His failure with His chosen people. They *would* not be saved, they *would* not be faithful; and God had to accomplish His work of planting the true and spiritual religion in the world by means of a mere remnant of faithful men chosen from a faithless multitude.

But though this plan failed miserably in one way, in the way of gaining the bulk of the people, it succeeded in another. As has just been said, *the* purpose of God was in any case accomplished. But even apart from that, the religious education that was given was of immense importance. It raised the level of life for all; like the Nile mud in the inundation, it fertilised the whole field of this people's life. It kept an ideal, too, before men, without which they would have fallen even lower than they did. And it lay in the minds of even the worst, ready to be changed into something higher; for

without previous intellectual acquaintance with the facts, the deeper knowledge was impossible. Moreover the ordinary civil morality of the people rested upon it. Without their religion and the facts on which it was based, the moral code had no hold upon them, and could have none. That had grown up in one complex tangle with religion; it had received its highest inspiration from the conception of God handed down from the fathers; and apart from that it would have fallen into an incoherent mass of customs unable to justify or account for their existence. In every community the same principle holds. Hence whatever the theory of the relation of the State to religion which may prevail, no State can, without much harm, ignore the religion of the people. It may sometimes even be wise and right for a government to introduce or to encourage a higher religion at the expense of a lower. But it can never be either wise or right to be inadvertent of religion altogether. In accordance with this precept, the rulers of Israel never were so. They not only encouraged parents to be strenuous, as this passage demands of them, but on more than one occasion they made definite provision for the religious instruction of the people. In a formal sense that grew into a habit which even yet has not lost its hold; and hence, as we have seen, the Jews have been kept true in an unexampled manner to their racial and religious characteristics.

CHAPTER IX

THE BAN

DEUT. vii.

AS in the previous chapter we have had the Mosaic and Deuteronomic statement of the internal and spiritual means of defending the Israelite character and faith from the temptations which the conquest in Canaan would bring with it, in this we have strenuous provision made against the same evil by external means. The mind first was to be fortified against the temptation to fall away; then the external pressure from the example of the peoples they were to conquer was to be minimised by the practice of the ban. The first five verses, and the last two deal emphatically with that, as also does ver. 16, and what lies between is a statement of the grounds upon which a strict execution of this dreadful measure was demanded. These, as is usual in Deuteronomy, are dealt with somewhat discursively; but the command as to the ban, coming as it does at the beginning, middle, and end, gives this chapter unity, and suggests that it should be treated under this head as a whole. There are besides other passages which can most conveniently be discussed in connection with chapter vii. These are the historic statements as to the ban having been laid upon the cities of Sihon (Deut. ii. 34) and Og (Deut. iii. 6); the provision for the extirpation of idolatrous persons and communities

(Deut. xiii. 15); and lastly, that portion of the law of war which treats of the variations in the execution of the ban which circumstances might demand (Deut. xx. 13-18). These passages, taken together, give an almost exhaustive statement in regard to the nature and limitations of the Cherem, or ban, in ancient Israel, a statement much more complete than is elsewhere to be found; and they consequently suggest, if they do not demand, a complete investigation of the whole matter.

It is quite clear that the Cherem, or ban, by which a person or thing, or even a whole people and their property, were devoted to a god, was not a specially Mosaic ordinance, for it is a custom known to many half-civilised and some highly civilised nations. In Livy's account of early Rome we read that Tarquinius, after defeating the Sabines, burned the spoils of the enemy in a huge heap, in accordance with a vow to Vulcan, made before advancing into the Sabine country. The same custom is alluded to in Vergil, *Æn.* viii. 562, and Cæsar, *B.G.* vi. 17, tells us a similar thing of the Gauls. The Mexican custom of sacrificing all prisoners of war to the god of war was of the same kind. But the most complete example of the ban in the Hebrew sense, occurring among a foreign people, is to be found in the Moabite stone which Mesha, king of Moab, erected in the ninth century B.C., *i.e.* in the days of Ahab. Of course Moab and Israel were related peoples, and it might in itself be possible that Moab during its subjection to Israel had adopted the ban from Israel. But that is highly improbable, considering how widespread this custom is, and how deeply its roots are fixed in human nature. Rather we should take the Moabite ban as an example of its usual form among the Semitic peoples. "And Chemosh said to me, Go, take Nebo against Israel. And I went by night and fought against it from the break of morn until noon, and took it and killed

them all, seven thousand men and boys, and women and girls and maid-servants, for I had devoted it to 'Ashtor-Chemosh'; and I took thence the vessels" (so Renan) "of Yahweh, and I dragged them before Chemosh."[1] The ordinary Semitic word for the ban is *Cherem.* It denotes a thing separated from or prohibited to common use, and no doubt it indicated originally merely that which was given over to the gods, separated for their exclusive use for ever. In this way it was distinguished from that which was "sanctified" to Yahweh, for that could be redeemed; devoted things could not.

In the ancient laws repeated in Lev. xxvii. 28, 29, two classes of devoted things seem to be referred to. First of all, we have the things which an individual may devote to God, "whether of man or beast, or of the field of his possession." The provision made in regard to them is that they shall not be sold or redeemed, but shall become in the highest degree sacred to Yahweh. Men so devoted, therefore, became perpetual slaves at the holy places, and other kinds of property fell to the priests. In the next verse, 29, we read, "None devoted which shall be devoted of" (*i.e.* from among) "men shall be ransomed; he shall surely be put to death," but that must refer to some other class of men devoted to Yahweh. It is inconceivable that in Israel individuals could at their own will devote slaves or children to death. Moreover, if every man devoted must be killed, the provision of Numb. xviii. 14, according to which everything devoted in Israel is to be Aaron's, could not be carried out. Further, there is a difference in expression in the two verses: in 28 we have things "devoted to Yahweh," in 29 we have simply men "devoted."[2] There can be little doubt, there-

[1] Driver, *Notes on Hebrew Text of the Books of Samuel*, p. 101, note.
[2] Cf. Dillmann, *Exodus and Leviticus*, p. 634.

fore, that we have in ver. 29 the case of men condemned for some act for which the punishment prescribed by the law was the ban (as in Exod. xxii. 19, "He that sacrificeth unto any god save unto Yahweh only shall be put to the ban"), or which some legal tribunal considered worthy of that punishment. In such cases, the object of the ban being something offensive, something which called out the Divine wrath and abhorrence, this "devotion" to God meant utter destruction. Just as *anathēma*, a thing set up in a temple as a votive offering, became *anathĕma*, an accursed thing, and as *sacer*, originally meaning sacred, came to mean devoted to destruction, so *Cherem*, among the Semites, came to have the meaning of a thing devoted to destruction by the wrath of the national gods. From ancient days it had been in use, and in Israel it continued to be practised, but with a new moral and religious purpose which antiquity could know nothing of. No more conspicuous instance of that transformation of ancient customs of a doubtful or even evil kind by the spirit of the religion of Yahweh, which is one of the most remarkable characteristics of the history of Israel, can be conceived than this use of the ban for higher ends.

As the fundamental idea of the *Cherem* was the devoting of objects to a god, it is manifest that the whole inner significance of the institution would vary with the conception of the Deity. Among the worshippers of cruel and sanguinary gods, such as the gods of the heathen Semites were, the ends which this practice was used to promote would naturally be cruel and sanguinary. Moreover, where it was thought that the gods could be bought over by acceptable sacrifices, where they were conceived of as non-moral beings, whose reasons for favour or anger were equally capricious and unfathomable, it was inevitable that the *Cherem* should be mainly used to bribe these gods to favour and help their peoples. Where victory seemed

easy and within the power of the nation, the spoil and the inhabitants of a conquered city or country would be taken by the conquerors for their own use. Where, on the other hand, victory was difficult and doubtful, an effort would be made to win the favour of the god, and wring success from him by promising him all the spoil. The slaughter of the captives would be considered the highest gratification such sanguinary gods could receive, while their pride would be held to be gratified by the utter destruction of the seat of the worship of other gods. Obviously it was in this way that the Gauls and Germans worked this institution; and the probability is that the heathen Semites would view the whole matter from an even lower standpoint. But to true worshippers of Yahweh such thoughts must have grown abhorrent. From the moment when their God became the centre and the norm of moral life to Israel, acts which had no scope but the gratification of a thirst for blood, or of a petty jealous pride, could not be thought acceptable to Him. Every institution and custom, therefore, which had no moral element in it, had either to be swept away, or moralised in the spirit of the purer faith. Now the ban was not abolished in Israel; but it was moralised, and turned into a potent and terrible weapon for the preservation and advancement of true religion.

By the Divine appointment the national life of Israel was bound up with the foundation and progress of true religion. It was in this people that the seeds of the highest religion were to be planted, and it was by means of it that all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. But as the chief means to this end was to be the higher ethical and religious character of the nation as such, the preservation of that from depravation and decay became the main anxiety of the prophets and priests and law-givers of Israel. Just as in modern days the preservation

nd defence of the State is reckoned in every country the upreme law which overrides every other consideration, so n Israel the preservation of the higher life was regarded. Rude and half-civilised as Israel was at the beginning of ts career, the Divinely revealed religion had made men onscious of that which gave this people its unique value oth to God and men. They recognised that its glory nd strength lay in its thought of God, and in the haracter which this impressed upon the corporate life, s well as on the life of each individual. As we have een, this bred in them a consciousness of a higher calling, f a higher obligation resting on them than upon others. They consequently felt the necessity of guarding their pecial character, and used the ban as their great weapon o ward off the contagion of evil, and to give this character room to develop itself. Its tremendous, even cruel, power was directed in Israel to this end; it was from this point of view alone that it had value in the eyes of the fully enlightened man of Israel. Stade in his history (vol. i., p. 490) holds that this distinction did not exist, that the Israelite view differed in little, if anything, from that of their heathen kinsmen, and that the ban resulted from a vow intended to gratify Yahweh and win His favour by giving Him the booty. But it is undeniable that in the earliest statement in regard to it (Exod. xx.) there is a distinct legislative provision that the ban should be proclaimed and executed irrespective of any vow; and n the later, but still early, notices of it in Joshua, Judges, nd 1 Samuel the command to execute it comes in every ase from Yahweh. In Deuteronomy, again, the ethical purpose of the ban is always insisted upon, most emphatically perhaps in chap. xx. 17 ff., where the *Cherem* is laid lown as a regular practice in war against the heathen nhabitants of Canaan: "But thou shalt utterly destroy hem, . . . that they teach you not to do after all their

abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against Yahweh your God." Whatever hints or appearances there may be in the Scripture narratives that the lower view still clung to some minds are not to be taken as indicating the normal and recognised view. They were, like much else of a similar kind, mere survivals, becoming more and more shadowy as the history advances, and at last entirely vanishing away. The new and higher thought which Moses planted was the rising and prevailing element in the Israelite consciousness. The lower thought was a decaying reminiscence of the state of things which the Mosaic revelation had wounded to the death, but which was slow in dying.

In Israel, therefore, the ban was, on the principles of the higher religion, legitimate only where the object was to preserve that religion when gravely endangered. If any object could justify a measure so cruel and sweeping as the ban, this could, and this is the only ground upon which the Scriptures defend it. That the danger was grave and imminent, when Israel entered Canaan, cannot be doubted. As we have seen, the Israelite tribes were far from being of one blood or of one faith. There was a huge mixed multitude along with them; and even among those who had unquestioned title to be reckoned among Israelites, many were gross, carnal, and slavish in their conceptions of things. They had not learned thoroughly nor assimilated the lessons they had been taught. Only the elect among them had done that; and the danger from contact with races, superior in culture, and religiously not so far below the position occupied by the multitude of Israel, was extreme. The nation was born in a day, but it had been educated only for a generation; it was raw and ignorant in all that concerned the Yahwistic faith. In fact it was precisely in the condition in which spiritual disease could

be most easily contracted and would be most deadly. The new religion had not been securely organised; the customs and habits of the people still needed to be moulded by it, and could not, consequently, act as the stay and support of religion as they did at later times. Further, the people were at the critical moment when they were passing from one stage of social life to another. At such moments there is immense danger to the health and character of a nation, for there is no unity of ideal present to every mind. That which they are moving away from has not ceased to exert its influence, and that *to* which they are moving has not asserted itself with all its power. At such crises in the career of peoples emerging from barbarism, even physical disease is apt to be deadlier and more prevalent than it is among either civilised or entirely savage men. The old Semitic heathenism had not been entirely overcome, and the new and higher religion had not succeeded in establishing full dominion. Contact with the Canaanites in almost any shape would under such circumstances be like the introduction of a contagious disease, and at almost any price it had to be avoided. The customs of the world at that time, and of the Semitic nations in particular, offered this terribly effective weapon of the "ban," and for this higher purpose it was accepted; and it was enforced with a stringency which nothing would justify short of the fact that life or death to the great hope of mankind was involved in it.

But it may be and should be asked, Would any circumstances justify Christian men, or a Christian nation, in entering upon a war of extermination now? and if not, how can a war of extermination against the Canaanities have been sanctioned by God? In answer to the first question, it must be said that, while circumstances can be conceived under which the extermination of a race would certainly be carried out by nations called Christian,

it is hardly possible to imagine Christian men taking part in such a massacre. Even the supposed command of God could not induce them to do so.[1] It would be so contrary to all that they have learned of God's will, both as regards themselves and others, that they would hesitate. Almost certainly they would decide that they were bound to be faithful to what God had revealed of Himself; they would feel that He could not wish to blunt their moral sense and undo what He had done for them, and they would put aside the command as a temptation. But the case with the Israelites was altogether different. The question is not, how could God destroy a whole people? Were it only that, there would be little difficulty. Everywhere in His action through nature God is ruthless enough against sin. Vice and sin are every day bringing men and women and innocent children to death, and to suffering worse than death. For that very believer in God holds the Divine law responsible. And when the Divine command was laid upon the Israelites to do, more speedily, and in a more awe-inspiring way, what Canaanite vices were already doing, there can be no difficulty except in so far as the effect upon the Israelites is concerned. It is by death, inflicted as the punishment of vice, and sparing neither woman nor child, that nations have, as a rule, been blotted out; and, except to the confused thinker, so far as the Divine action is concerned there is no difference between such cases and this of the Canaanites. The real question is, Can a living, personal God deliberately set to men a task which can only lower them in the scale of humanity—brutalise them, in fact? No, is of course the only possible answer; therefore a supposed Divine command coming to us to do such things would rightly be suspected. We could not, we

[1] Mozley's *Lectures on the Old Testament*, p. 102.

feel sure, be called upon by God to slay the innocent with the guilty, to overwhelm in one common punishment individual beings who have each of them an inalienable claim to justice at our hands. But the Israelites had not and could not have the feeling we have on the subject. The feeling for the individual did not exist in early times. The clan, the tribe, the nation was everything, and the individual nothing. Consequently there was not existent in the world that keen feeling in regard to individual rights, which dominates us so completely that we can with difficulty conceive any other view. In this world the early Israelite scarcely perceived the individual man, and beyond this world he knew of no certain career for him. He consequently dealt with him only as part of his clan or tribe. His tribe suffered for him and he for his tribe, and in early penal law the two could hardly be separated. Indeed it may almost be said that, when the individual suffered for his own sin, the satisfaction felt by the wronged was rather due to the tribe having suffered so much loss in the individual's death than to the retribution which fell upon him. Moreover war was the constant employment of all, and death by violence the most common of all forms of death. Manners and feelings were both rude, and the pains as well as the pleasures of civilised and Christian men lay largely beyond their horizon. There was consequently no danger of doing violence to nobler feelings or of leaving a sting in the conscience by calling such men to such work. The stage of moral development they had reached did not forbid it, and the work therefore might be given them of God.

But the grounds for the action were immeasurably raised. Instead of being left on the heathen level, "the usage was utilised so as to harmonise with the principles of their religion, and to satisfy its needs. It became a mode of secluding and rendering harmless anything which pecu-

liarly imperilled the religious life of either an individual or the community, such objects being withdrawn from society at large, and presented to the sanctuary, which had power, if needful, to authorise their destruction."[1] The Deuteronomic command is not given shamefacedly. The interests at stake are too great for that. Israel is utterly to smite the Canaanite nations, to put them to the ban, to make no covenant with them nor to intermarry with them. "Thus shall ye deal with them: ye shall break down their altars, and dash in pieces their obelisks, and hew down their Asherim, and burn their graven images with fire." There is a fierce, curt energy about the words which impresses the reader with the vigour needed to defend the true religion. The danger was seen to be great, and this tremendous weapon of the ban was to be wielded with unsparing rigour, if Israel was to be true to its highest call. "For," ver. 6 goes on to say, "thou art a holy people unto Yahweh thy God; Yahweh thy God hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto Himself, out of all peoples that are upon the face of the earth." They were the elect of God; they were a holy people, a people separated unto their God, and the Divine blessing was to come upon all nations through them if they remained true. Their separateness must therefore be maintained. As a people marked out by the love of God, they could not share in the common life of the world as it then was. They could not lift the Canaanites to their level by mingling with them. So they would only obscure, nay, in so far as this rigorous command was not carried out, they did all but fatally obscure, the higher elements of national and personal life which they had received. They were too recently converted to be the people of Yahweh, too weak in their own faith, to be able to do

[1] Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Samuel*, p. 101.

anything but stand in this austere and repellent attitude towards the world. Centuries passed before they could relax without danger. It may even be said that until the coming of our Lord they dared not take up any other than this separatist position, though as the ages passed and the prophetic influence grew, the yearning after a gathering in of the Gentiles, and the promise of it in the Messianic day, became more markedly prominent. Only when men could look forward to being made perfect in Jesus Christ did they receive the command to go unreservedly out into the world, for only then had they an anchor which no storm in the world could drag.

But we must be careful not to exaggerate the separation called for here. It does not authorise anything like the fierce, intolerant thirst for conquest and domination which was the very keynote of Islam.[1] In Deut. ii. 5, 6, 19, the lands of Edom, Moab, and Ammon are said to be Yahweh's gift to these peoples in the same way as Canaan was to Israel. Nor did the law ever authorise the bitter and contemptuous feeling with which Pharisaic Israelites often regarded all men beyond the pale of Judaism. There was no general prohibition against friendly intercourse with other peoples. It was against those only, whose presence in Canaan would have frustrated the establishment of the theocracy, and whose influence would have been destructive of it when established, that the "ban" was decreed. When war arose between Israel and cities farther off than those of Canaan, they were not to be put to the "ban." Though they were to be hardly treated according to our ideas, they were to suffer only the fate of cities stormed in those days, for the danger of corruption was proportionately diminished (Deut. xx. 17) by their distance. The right of other peoples to their lands was to be respected, and friendly inter-

[1] Riehm, *Old Testament Theology*, p. 98.

course might be entered on with them. But the right of Israel to the free and unhindered development to which it had been called by Yahweh was the supreme law. The suspicion of danger to that was to make things otherwise harmless, or even useful, to be abhorred. If men are to live nearer to God than others, they must sacrifice much to the higher call.

To press home this, to induce Israel to respond to this demand, to convince them anew of their obligation to go any length to keep their position as a people holy to Yahweh, our chapter urges a variety of reasons. The first (vv. 7-11) is that the history and grounds of their election exhibit the character of Yahweh in such a way as to heighten their sense of their privileges and the danger of losing them. He had chosen them, only because of His own love to them; and having chosen them and sworn to their fathers, He is true to His covenant. He brought them out of the house of bondage, and has led them until now. In Yahweh they had a spiritual ideal, whose characteristics were love and faithfulness. But though He loves He can be wrathful, and though He has made a covenant with Israel, it must be fulfilled in accordance with righteousness. In dealing with such a God they must beware of thinking that their election is irrespective of moral conditions, or that His love is mere good nature. He can and does smite the enemies of good, for anger is always possible where love is. It is only with good nature that anger is not compatible, just as warm and self-sacrificing affection also is. Those who turn away from Him, therefore, He requites immediately to their face, as surely as "He keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments." All the blessed and intimate relations which He has opened up with them, and in which their safety and their glory lie, can be dissolved by sin. They are, there-

fore, to strike fiercely at temptation, to regard neither their own lives nor the lives of others when that has to be put out of the way, to smite and spare not, for the very love of God.

A second reason why they should obey the Divine commands, as in other matters, so in this terrible thing, is this. If they be willing and obedient, then God will bless them in temporal ways as well as with spiritual blessings. Even for their earthly prosperity a loyal attitude to Yahweh would prove decisive. "Thou shalt be blessed above all peoples; there shall not be a male or female barren among you, or among your cattle. And Yahweh will take away from thee all sickness, and He will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt which thou knowest upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee." The same promises are renewed in more detail and with greater emphasis in the speech contained in chapters xxviii. and xxix. There the significance of such a view, and the difficulties involved in it for us, will be fully discussed. Here it will be sufficient to note that the profit of obedience is brought in to induce Israel to enforce the "ban" most rigorously.

The last verses of our chapter, vv. 17-26, set before Israel a third incitement and encouragement. Yahweh, who had proved His might and His favour for them by His mighty deeds in Egypt, would be among them, to make them stronger than their mightiest foes (ver. 21): "Thou shalt not be affrighted at them, for Yahweh thy God is in the midst of thee, a great God and a terrible." The previous inducements to obey Yahweh their God and be true to Him were founded on His character and on His acts. He was merciful; but He could be terrible, and He would reward the faithful with prosperity. Now His people are encouraged to go forward because His presence will go with them. In the conflicts which

obedience to Him would provoke, He would be with them to sustain them, whatever stress might come upon them. Step by step they would drive out those very peoples whom they had dreaded so when the spies brought back their report of the land. The terror of their God would fall upon all these nations. A great God and a terrible He would prove Himself to be, and with Him in their midst they might go forth boldly to execute the ban upon the Canaanites. The sins and vices of these peoples had brought this upon them; their horrible worship left an indelible stain wherever its shadow fell. Israel, led and directed by Yahweh Himself, was to fall upon them as the scourge of God.

Nothwithstanding the Divine urgency, the command to destroy the Canaanites and their idols was not carried out. After a victory or two the enemy began to submit. Glad to be rid of the toils of war, Israel settled down among the people of the land. All central control would seem to have disappeared. The Canaanite worship and the Canaanite customs attracted and fascinated the people, and enemy after enemy broke in upon them and triumphed over them. The half-idolatrous masses were led away into depraved forms of worship, and for a time it looked as if the work of Moses would be utterly undone. Had the purer faith he taught them not been revived, Israel would probably not have survived the period of the Judges. As it was, they just survived; but by their lapse the leavening of the whole of the nation with the pure principles of Yahweh-worship had been stopped. Instead of being cured, the idolatrous inclinations they had brought with them from the pre-Mosaic time had been revived and strengthened. Multitudes, while calling Yahweh their God, had sunk almost to the Canaanite level in their worship, and during the whole period of their existence as a nation Israel as a whole never again

rose clear of half-heathen conceptions of their God. The prophets taught and threatened them in vain, until at last ruin fell upon them and the Divine threats of punishment were fulfilled.

CHAPTER X

THE BAN IN MODERN LIFE

IN our modern time this practice of the ban has, of course, become antiquated and impossible. The *Cherem*, or ban, of the modern synagogue is a different thing, based upon different motives, and is directed to the same ends as Christian excommunication. But though the thing has ceased, the principles underlying it, and the view of life which it implies, are of perpetual validity. These belong to the essential truths of religion, and especially need to be recalled in a time like ours, when men tend everywhere to a feeble, lax, and cosmopolitan view of Christianity. As we have seen, the fundamental principle of the *Cherem* was that, however precious, however sacred, however useful and helpful in ordinary circumstances a thing might be, whenever it became dangerous to the higher life it should at once be given up to Yahweh. The lives of human beings, even though they were men's dearest and nearest, should be sacrificed; the richest works of art, the weapons of war, and the wealth which would have adorned life and made it easy, were equally to be given up to Him, that He might seclude them and render them harmless to men's highest interests. Neighbourliness to the Canaanites was absolutely forbidden, and the Church of the Old Testament was commanded to take up a position of hostility, or at best of armed neutrality, to all the pleasures, interests, and concerns of the peoples who surrounded them. Now the prevailing

modern view is that not only the ban itself, but these principles have become obsolete. Notwithstanding that the Church of the New Testament is the bearer of the higher interests of humanity, we are taught that when it is least definite in its direction as to conduct, when it is most tolerant of the practices of the world, then it is most true to its original conception. We are told that an indulgent Church is what is wanted; rigour and religion are now supposed to be finally divorced in all enlightened minds. This view is not often categorically expressed, but it underlies all fashionable religion, and has its apostles in the golden youth who forward enlightenment by playing tennis on Sundays. Because of it too, Puritan has become a name of scorn, and careless self-gratification a mark of cultured Christianity. Not only asceticism, but ἄσκησις has been discredited, and the moral tone of society has perceptibly fallen in consequence. In wide circles both within and without the Church it seems to be held that pain is the only intolerable evil, and in legislation as well as in literature that idea has been registering itself.

For much of this progress, as some call it, no reasoned justification has been attempted, but it has been defended in part by the allegation that the circumstances which make the "ban" necessary to the very life of the ancient people of God have passed away, now that social and political life has been Christianised. Even those who are outside the Church in Christian lands are no longer living at a moral and spiritual level so much below that of the Church. They are not heathen idolaters, whose moral and religious ideas are contagiously corrupting, and nothing but Pharisaism of the worst type, it is said, can justify the Church in taking up a position to society in any degree like that which was imposed upon ancient Israel. Now it cannot be denied that there is truth here,

and in so far as the Christian Church or individual Christians have taken up precisely the same position to those without as is implied in the Old Testament ban, they are not to be defended. Modern society, as at present constituted, is not corrupting like that of Canaan. No one in a modern Christian state has been brought up in an atmosphere of heathenism, and what an incredible difference that involves only those who know heathenism well can appreciate. If spiritual life is neither understood nor believed in by all, yet the rules of morals are the same in every mind, and these rules are the product of Christianity. As a consequence, the Church is not endangered in the same way and to the same degree by contact with the world as in the ancient days. Indeed to the Israelite of the post-Mosaic time our "world," which some sects at least would absolutely ignore and shut out, would seem a very definite and legitimate part of the Church. The Jewish Church was certainly to a very large extent made up of precisely such elements, while those who were to be put to the ban were far more remote than any citizens of a modern state, except a portion of the criminal class. Further, those not actively Christian are, on account of this community of moral sentiments, open to appeal from the Church as the heathen Canaanites were not. In English-speaking lands, while there are multitudes indifferent to Christianity, most acknowledge the obligation of the Christian motives. In nations at least nominally Christian, therefore, both because the danger of corruption is greatly less, and because the world is more accessible to the leaven of Christian life, no Church can, or dare, without incurring terrible loss and responsibility, withdraw from or show a merely hostile front to the world. The sects which do so live an invalid life. Their virtues take on the sickly look of all "fugitive and cloistered virtue." Their doctrines

become full of the "idols of the cave," and they cease to have any perception of the real needs of men.

Nevertheless the austere spirit inculcated in this chapter must be kept alive, if the Church is to be the spiritual leader of humanity, for strenuousness is the great want of modern life. Dr. Pearson, whose book on *National Life and Character* has lately expounded the theory that the Church, "being too inexorable in its ideal to admit of compromises with human frailty, is precisely on this account unfitted for governing fallible men and women," *i.e.* governing them in the political sense, has elsewhere stated his view of the remedy for one of the great evils of modern life.[1] "The disproportionate growth of the distributing classes, as compared with the producing, is due, I believe, to two moral causes—the love of amusement and the passion for speculation. Men flock out of healthy country lives in farms or mines into our great cities, because they like to be near the theatre and the racecourse, or because they hope to grow rich suddenly by some form of gambling. The cure for a taint of this kind is not economical but religious, and can only be found, I am convinced, in a return to the masculine asceticism that has distinguished the best days of history, Puritan or Republican." This is emphatically true of Australia, where and of which the words were first spoken; and masculine asceticism of the Puritan type would cure many another evil there besides these. But the same thing is true everywhere; and if religion is to cure slackness in social or political life, how much more must it cultivate this austere spirit for itself! The function of the Church is not to govern the world; it seeks rather to inspire the world. It should lead the advance to a higher, more ennobling life, and should exhibit that

[1] *The Social Movements of the Age*, by Professor Pearson, Melbourne Church Congress, 1882.

in its own collective action and in the kind of character it produces. Its greatest gift to the world should be itself, and it is useful only when it is true to its own *ethos* and spirit. To keep that unimpaired must therefore be its first duty, and to fulfil that duty it must keep rigorously back from everything which, in relation to its own existing state, would be likely to lower the power of its peculiar life. The State must often compromise with human frailty. Often there will be before the legislator and the statesman only a choice between two evils, or at least two undesirable courses, unless a worse thing is to be tolerated. The Church, on the other hand, should keep close to the ideal as it sees it. Its reason for existence is that it may hold up the ideal to men, and exhibit it as far as that may be. Compromise in regard to that is impossible for the Church, for that would be nothing else than disloyalty to its own essential principle. The spirit, therefore, that inspired the "ban" must always be living and powerful in the Church. Whatever is dangerous to the special Christian life must cease to exist for Christians. It should be laid at the feet of their Divine Head, that He may seclude it from His people and render it innocuous. Many things that are harmless or even useful at a lower level of life must be refused a place by the Christian. Gratifications that cannot but seem good to others must be refused by him; for he seeks to be in the forefront of the battle against evil, to be the pioneer to a more whole-hearted spiritual life.

But that does not imply that we should seek to renew the various imperfect and external devices by which past times sought to attain this exceedingly desirable end. Experience has taught the folly and futility of sumptuary laws, for example. Their only effect was to do violence to the inwardness which belongs of necessity to spiritual life. They externalised and depraved morality, and

finally defeated themselves. Nor would the later Puritanism, with its rigidity as regards dress and deportment, and its narrow and limited view of life, help us much more. It began doubtless with the right principle; but it sought to bind all to its observances, whether they cared for the spirit of them or not; and it showed a measureless intemperance in regard to the things which it declared hostile to the life of faith. In that form it has been charged with "isolation from human history, human enjoyment, and all the manifold play and variety of human character." For a short time, however, Puritanism did strike the golden mean in this matter, and probably we could not in this present connection find a better example for modern days than in the Puritanism of Spenser, of Colonel Hutchinson (one of the regicides so called), and of Milton. Their united lives covered the heroic period of Puritanism, and taken in their order they represent very fairly its rise, its best estate, and its tendencies towards harsh extremes, when as yet it was but a tendency.

Spenser, born in the "spacious times of great Elizabeth," was politically and nationally a Puritan, and in aim and ideal, at least, was so in his stern view of life and religion.[1] His attachment to Lord Grey of Wilton, that personally kind yet absolutely ruthless executor of the English "ban" against the untamable Irish, and his defence of his policy, show the one; while his *Fairy Queen*, with its representation of religion as "the foundation of all nobleness in man" and its dwelling upon man's victory over himself, reveals the other. But he had in him also elements belonging to that strangely mingled world in which he lived, and which came from an entirely different source. He had the Elizabethan enthusiasm

[1] Vide Church's *Spenser*, p. 16.

for beauty, the large delight in life as such even where its moral quality was questionable, and the artist's sensitiveness and adaptability in a very high degree These diverse elements were never fully interfused in him. Amid all the gracious beauty of his work, there is the trace of discord and the mark of conflict; and at times perhaps his life fell into courses which spoke little of self-control. But his face was always in the main turned upwards. In the main, too, his life corresponded with his aspirations. He combined his poetic gift, his love of men and human life, with a faithfulness to his ideal of conduct which, if not always perfect, was sincere, and was, too, as we may hope, ultimately victorious. The Puritan in him had not entire victory over the worldling, but it had the mastery; and the very imperfection of the victory kept the character in sympathy with the whole of life.

In Colonel Hutchinson,[1] as depicted in that stately and tender panegyric which speaks to us across more than two centuries so pathetically of his wife's almost adoring love, we see the Puritan character in its fullest and most balanced form. We do not, of course, mean that his mind had the imaginative power of Spenser's, or his character the force of Milton's; but partly from circumstances, partly by singular grace of nature, his character possessed a stability and an equilibrium which had not come when Spenser lived, and which was beginning to go in the evil days upon which Milton fell. At the root of all his virtues his wife sets "that which was the head and spring of them all, his Christianity." "By Christianity," she says, "I intend that universal habit of grace which is wrought in a soul by the regenerating Spirit of God, whereby the whole creature is

[1] *Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson*, by his wife.

resigned up into the Divine will and love, and all its actions designed to the obedience and glory of its Maker." He had been trained in a Puritan home, and though when he went out into the world he had to face quite the average temptations of a rich and well-born youth, he fled all youthful lusts. But he did not retire from the world. "He could dance admirably well, but neither in youth nor riper years made any practice of it; he had skill in fencing such as became a gentleman; he had a great love to music, and often diverted himself with a viol, on which he played masterly; he had an exact ear, and judgment in other music; he shot excellently in bows and guns, and much used them for his exercise; he had great judgment in painting, graving, sculpture, and all liberal arts, and had many curiosities of value in all kinds. He took much pleasure in improvement of grounds, in planting groves and walks and fruit-trees, in opening springs and making fishponds. Of country recreations he loved none but hawking, and in that was very eager, and much delighted for the time he used it." Hutchinson was no ascetic, therefore, in the wrong sense, but lived in and enjoyed the world as a man should. But perhaps his greatest divergence from the lower Puritanism lay in this, that "everything that it was necessary for him to do he did with delight, free and unconstrained." Moreover, though he adopted strong Puritan opinions in theology, "he hated persecution for religion, and was always a champion for all religious people against all their great oppressors. Nevertheless self-restraint was the law of his life, and he many times forbore things lawful and delightful to him, rather than he would give any one occasion of scandal." In public affairs he took the courageous part of a man who sought nothing for himself, and was moved only by his hatred of wrong to leave the prosperity and peace of his home-

life. He became a member of the Court which tried the King against his will, but signed the warrant for his death, simply because he conceived it to be his duty. When the Restoration came and he was challenged for his conduct, scorning the subterfuges of some who declared they signed under compulsion, he quietly accepted the responsibility for his acts. This led to his death in the flower of his age, through imprisonment in the Tower; but he never flinched, "having made up his accounts with life and death, and fixed his purpose to entertain both honourably." From the beginning of his life to the end there was a consistent sanity, which is rare at any time, and was especially rare in those days. His loyalty to God kept him austerely aloof from unworthiness, while it seemed to add zest to the sinless joys which came in his way. Above all, it never suffered him to forget that the true Christian temper and character was the pearl of price which all else he had might lawfully be sacrificed to purchase.

In the character of Milton we find the same essential elements, the same purity in youth, which, with his beauty, won for him the name of the Lady of his College; the same courage and public spirit in manhood; the same love of music and of culture. After his University career he retired to his father's house, and read all Greek and Latin literature, as well as Italian, and studied Hebrew and some other Oriental languages. All the culture of his time, therefore, was absorbed by him, and his mind and speech were shot through and through with the brilliant colours of the history and romance of many climes. Almost no kind of beauty failed to appeal to him, but the austerity of his views of life kept him from being enslaved by it. In his earlier works even, he caught in a surprising way all the glow, and splendour, and poetic fervour of the English Renaissance; but he joined with

it the sternest and most uncompromising Puritan morality, not only in theory and desire like Spenser, but in the hard practice of actual life. When the idea of duty comes to dominate a man, the grace and impetuosity of youth, the overmastering love of beauty, and the appreciation of the mere joy of living are apt to die away, and the poetic fire burns low. But it was not so with Milton. To the end of his life he remained a true Elizabethan, but an Elizabethan who had always kept himself free from the chains of sensual vice, and had never stained his purity of soul. That fact makes him unique almost in English history, and has everywhere added a touch of the sublime to all that his works have of beauty. "His soul was like a star, and dwelt apart:" and we may entirely believe what he tells us of himself when he returned from his European travels: "In all the places in which vice meets with so little discouragement, and is protected with so little shame, I never once turned from the path of integrity and virtue, and perpetually reflected that, though my conduct might escape the notice of men, it could not elude the inspection of God." Like the true Puritan he was, Milton not only overcame evil in himself, but he thought his own life and health a cheap price to pay for the overthrow of evil wherever he saw it. When the civil war broke out, he returned at once from his travels, to help to right the wrongs of his country. In the service of the Government he sacrificed his poetic gift, his leisure for twenty years, and finally his sight, to the task of defending England from her enemies. But he did not stop there. His severity became excessive, at times almost vindictive. When he wrote prose he scarcely ever wrote without having an enemy to crush, and much that he uttered in this vein cannot possibly be approved. His pamphlets are unfair to a degree which shows that his mind had lost balance in the turmoil

of the great struggle, so that he approached at moments the narrower Puritanism. But he still proved himself too great for that, and emerged anew as a great and lofty spirit, held down very little by earthly bonds, and strenuously set against evil as a true servant of God.

Now the temper of Puritanism such as this of these old English worthies is precisely what Christians need most to cultivate in these days. They must be animated by the spirit which refuses to touch, and refers to God, whatever proves hostile to life in God; but they must also combine with this aloofness a sympathetic hold on ordinary life. It is easy on the one hand to solve all problems by cutting oneself off from any relation with the world, lest the inner life should suffer. It is also easy to let the inner life take care of itself, and to float blithely on with all the currents of life which are not deadly sins. But it is not easy to keep the mind and life open to all the great life-streams which tend to deepen and enrich human nature, and yet to stand firm in self-control, determined that nothing which drags down the soul shall be permitted to fascinate or overpower. To this task Christian men and the Christian Church seem at present to be specially called. It is admitted on all hands that the ordinary Puritanism became too intolerant of all except spiritual interests; so that it could not, without infinite loss, have been accepted as the guide for all life. But hence what was good in it has been rejected along with the bad; and it needs to be restored, if a weak, self-indulgent temper, which resents hardship or even discipline, is not to gain the upper hand. In social life especially this is needful, otherwise so much debate would never have been expended on the question of amusements. On the face of it, a Christianity which can go with the world in all those of its amusements which are not actually forbidden by the moral law must be a low

type of Christianity. It can be conscious of no special character which it has to preserve, of no special voice which it has to utter in the antiphony of created things. Whatever others allow themselves, therefore, the vigilant Christian must see to it that he does nothing which will destroy his special contribution to the world he lives in. It is precisely by that that he is the salt of the earth; and if the salt have lost its savour wherewith will you season it? No price is too great for the preservation of this savour, and in reference to the care of it each man must ultimately be a law unto himself. No one else can really tell where his weakness lies. No one else can know what the effect of this or that recreation upon that weakness is.

When men lose spiritual touch with their own character they are apt to throw themselves back for guidance in such matters upon the general opinion of the Christian community, or the tradition of the elders. In doing so they are in danger of losing sincerity in a mass of formalism. But if a vivid apprehension of the need of individuality in the regulation of life is maintained, the formulated Christian objection to certain customs or certain amusements may be a most useful substitute for painful experience of our own. Some such amusements may have been banned in the past without sufficient reason; or they may have been excluded only because of the special openness to temptation of a certain community; or they may have so changed their character that they do not now deserve the ban which was laid upon them once justly enough. Any plea, therefore, for the revisal or abolition of standing conventions on such grounds must be listened to and judged. But, on the whole, these standing prohibitions of the Church represent accumulated experience, and all young people especially will do wisely not to break away from them. What the mass of Christians in the

past have found hurtful to the Christian character will in most cases be hurtful still. For if it can be said of the secular world in all matters of experience that "this wise world is mainly right," it may surely be said also of the Christian community. In our time there is a quite justifiable distrust of conventionality in morals and in religion; but it should not be forgotten that conventions are not open to the same objection. They represent, on the whole, merely the registered results of actual experience, and they may be estimated and followed in an entirely free spirit. It is not wise, therefore, to revolt against them indiscriminately, merely because they may be used cruelly against others, or may be taken as a substitute for a moral nature by oneself. Thackeray in his constant railing at the judgment of the world seems to make this mistake. He is never weary in pointing out how unjust the broad general judgments of the world are to specially selected individuals. Harry Warrington in *The Virginians*, for instance, though innocent, lives in a manner and with associates which the world has generally found to indicate intolerable moral laxity; and because the world was wrong in thinking that to be true in his case which would have been true in ninety-five out of a hundred similar cases, the moralist rails at the evil-hearted judgments of the world. But "this wise world is mainly right," and its rough and indiscriminating judgments fit the average case. They are part of the great sanitary provision which society makes for its own preservation. And the case is precisely similar with the conventions of the religious life. They too are in the main sanitary precautions, which a conscience thoroughly alive and a strong intelligence may make superfluous, but which for the unformed, the half-ignorant, the less original natures, in a word, for average men and women, are absolutely necessary. Spontaneity and freedom are admir-

able qualities in morals and religion. They are even the conditions of the highest kinds of moral and religious life, and the necessary presuppositions of health and progress. But something is due to stability as well; and a world of original and spontaneous moralists, trusting only to their own "genial sense" of truth, would be a maddening chaos. In other words, conventions if used unconventionally, if not exalted into absolute moral laws disobedience to which excludes from reputable society, if taken simply as indications of the paths in which least danger to the higher life has been found to lie, are guides for which men may well be thankful.

In the world of thought too, as well as in the world of action, a wise austerity of self-control is absolutely necessary. The prevailing theory is that every one, young men more especially, should read on all sides on all questions, and that they should know and sympathise with all modes of thought. This is advocated in the supposed interests of freedom from external domination and from internal prejudice. But in a great number of cases the result does not follow. Such catholicity of taste does produce a curious *dilettante* interest in lines of thought, but as a rule it weakens interest in truth as such. It delivers from the domination of a Church or other historic authority; but only, in most cases, to hand over the supposed freeman to the narrower domination of the thinker or school by which he happens to be most impressed. For it is vain and impotent to suppose that in regard to morals and religion every mind is able to find its way by free thought, when in regard to bodily health, or even in questions of finance, the free thought of the amateur is acknowledged to end usually in confusion. Those only can usefully expose their minds to all the various currents of modern thought who have a clear footing of their own. Whatever that may be, it gives them a point

on which to stand, and a vantage-ground from which they can gather up what widens or corrects their view. But to leave the land altogether, and commit oneself to the currents, is to render any after-landing all but impossible. With regard to the books read, the lines of thought followed, and the associations formed, the Christian must exercise self-denial and self-examination. Whatever is manifestly detrimental to his best life, whatever he feels to be likely to taint the purity of his mind or lower his spiritual vitality, should be put under the "ban," should be resolutely avoided in all ordinary cases. Of course modes of thought that deserve to be weighed may be found mingled with such elements; also views of life which have a truth and importance of their own, though their setting is corrupt. But it is not every one's business to extricate and discuss these. Those who are called to it will have to do it; and in doing it as a duty they may expect to be kept from the lurking contagion. Every one else who investigates them runs a risk which he was not called upon to run. The average Christian should, therefore, note all that tends to stunt or deprave him spiritually, and should avoid it. It is not manliness but folly which makes men read filthy literature because of its style, or sceptical literature because of its ability, when they are not called upon to do so, and when they have not fortified themselves by the purity of the Scriptures and the power of prayer. To make such literature or such modes of thought our staple mental food, or to make the writers or admirers of such books our intimate friends, is to sap our own best convictions and to disregard our high calling.

Lastly, however common it may be for men to sit down in selfish isolation and devote themselves to their own interests, even though these be spritual, in the face of

remediable evils, that is not the Christian manner of acting. Of the great Puritans we mentioned, Spenser endured hardness in that terrible Irish war which the men of Elizabeth's day regarded as the war of good against evil; Hutchinson fought for and died in the cause of political and religious freedom; and Milton devoted his life and health to the same cause. All of them, the two latter especially, might have kept out of it all, in the peace and comfort of private life; but they judged that the destruction of evil was their first duty. At the trumpet call they willingly took their side, and prepared to give their lives, if necessary, for the righteous cause. Now it is not enough for us to avoid evil any more than it was for them. Though personal influence and example are undoubtedly among the most potent weapons in the warfare for the Kingdom of God, there must be, besides these, the power and the will to put public evils under the ban. Whatever institution or custom or law is ungodly, whatever in our social life is manifestly unjust, should stir the Christian Church to revolt against it, and should fill the heart of the individual Christian with an undying energy of hatred. It is not meant that the Christian Churches as such should transform themselves into political societies or social clubs. To do that would simply be to abdicate their only real functions. But they should be the sources of such teaching as will turn men's thoughts towards social justice and political righteousness, and should prepare them for the sacrifice which any great improvement in the social state must demand of some. Further, every individual Christian should feel that his responsibility for the condition of his brethren, those of his own nation, is very great and direct; that to discharge municipal and political duty with conscientious care is a primary obligation. Only so can the power be gained to "ban" the bad laws, the unjust

practices, the evil social customs, which disfigure our civilisation, which degrade and defraud the poor.

A militant Puritanism here is not only a necessity for further social progress, but it is also a necessity for the full exhibition of the power and the essential sympathies of Christianity. For want of it the working classes in their movement upward have not only been alienated from the Churches, but they have learned to demand of their leaders that they shall "countenance the poor man in his cause." They are tempted to require their leaders to share not only their common principles, but their prejudices; and they often look with suspicion upon those who insist upon applying the plumb-line of justice to the demands of the poor as well as to the claims of the rich. The whole popular movement suffers, for it is degraded from its true position. From being a demand for justice, it becomes a scramble for power—power too which, when gained, is sometimes used as selfishly and tyrannically by its new possessors as it sometimes was by those who previously exercised it. Into all branches of public life there is needed an infusion of a new and higher spirit. We want men who hate evil and will destroy it where they can, who seek nothing for themselves, who feel strongly that the kind of life the poor in civilised countries live is intolerably hard, and are prepared to suffer, if by any means they may improve it. But we want at the same time a type of reformer who, by his hold upon a power lying beyond this world, is kept steady to justice even where the poor are concerned, who, though he passionately longs for a better life for them, does not make more food, more leisure, more amusement, his highest aim. Men are needed who think more nobly of their brethren than that: men, on the one hand, who know that the Christian character and the Christian virtues may exist under the hardest con-

ditions, and that the Christian Church exists mainly to brighten and rob of its degradation the otherwise cheerless life of the multitude; but, on the other, who recognise that our present social state is fatal in many ways to moral and spiritual progress for the mass of men, and must be in some way recast.

All this means the entrance into public life of Christian men of the highest type. Such men the Christian community must supply to the State in great numbers, if the higher characteristics of our people are not to be lost. Through a long and eventful history, by the manifold training afforded by religion and experience, the English nation has become strong, patient, hopeful, and self-reliant, with an instinct for justice and a hatred of violence which cannot easily be paralleled. It has, too, retained a faith in and respect for religion which many other nations seem to have lost. That character is its highest achievement, and its decay would be deplorable. Christianity is specially called to help to preserve it, by bringing to its aid the power of its own special character, with its great spiritual resources. The sources of its life are hid, and must be kept pure; the power of its life must be made manifest in actual union with the higher elements in the national character for mutual defence. Above all, Christianity must not, timidly or sluggishly, draw upon itself the curse of Meroz by not coming to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Nor can it permit the immediate interests of the respectable to blind or hold it back. That which is best in its own nature demands all this; and in seeking to answer that demand the Churches will attain to a quite new life and power. The Lord their God will be in the midst of them, and they will feel it; for they will then have made themselves channels for the Divine purity and power.

CHAPTER XI

THE BREAD OF THE SOUL

DEUT. viii.

IN the chapters which follow, viz. viii., ix., and x. 1-11, we have an appeal to history as a motive for fulfilling the fundamental duty of loving God and keeping His commandments. In its main points it is substantially the same appeal which is made in chapters i.—iii., is, in fact, a continuation of it. Its main characteristics, therefore, have already been dealt with; but there are details here which deserve more minute study. Coming after Yahweh's great demand for the love of His people, the references to the Divine action in the past assume a deeper and more affectionate character than when they were mere general exhortations to obedience and submission. They become inducements to the highest efforts of love; and the first appeal is naturally made to the gracious and fatherly dealing of Yahweh with His people in their journey through the wilderness. Of all the traditions or reminiscences of Israel, this of the wilderness was the most constantly present to the popular mind, and it is always referred to as the most certain, the most impressive, and the most touching of all Israel's historic experiences. Yet Stade and others push the whole episode aside, saying, if any Israelites came out of Egypt, we do not know who they were. Such a mode of dealing with clear, coherent, and in themselves not improbable historical memories, is too arbitrary to have much effect, and

the wilderness journey remains, and is likely to remain, one of the indubitable facts which modern critical research has established rather than shaken.

To this, then, our author turns, and he deals with it in a somewhat unusual way. As we have seen, the prevalent notion that piety and righteousness are rewarded with material prosperity is firmly rooted in his mind. But he did not feel himself limited to that as the solitary right way of regarding the providence of God. Men's minds are never quite so simple and direct in their action as many students and critics are tempted to suppose. Every great conception which holds the minds of men produces its effects, even from the first moment it is grasped, by *all* that is in it. Implications and developments which are made explicit, or are called out into visibility, only by the friction of new environments, have been there from the beginning; and minds have been secretly moulded by them though they were not conscious of them. Hard and fast lines, then, are not to be drawn between the stages of a great development, so that one should say that before such and such a moment, when a new aspect of the old truth has emerged into consciousness, that aspect was not effective in any wise. The outburst of waters from a reservoir is indubitable evidence of steady persistent pressure from within in that direction before the overflow. Similarly, in the region of thought and feeling the emergence of a new aspect of truth is of itself a proof that the holders of the root conception were already swayed in that direction.

The history of Christianity affords proof of this. It is a commonplace to-day that the world is only beginning to do justice to some aspects of the teaching of our Lord. But the teaching, always present, always exerted its influence, and was felt before it could be explained. In the Old Testament development the same thing was most

emphatically true. Individual responsibility to God was not, so far as we can now see, distinctly present in Israelite religious thought till the time of Jeremiah, but it would be absurd to say that any mind that accepted the religion of Yahweh had ever been without that feeling. So with the doctrine of God's providence over men: we are not to say that before the Book of Job the explanation of suffering as testing discipline had been entirely hid from Israel, by the view that material prosperity and adversity were regulated in the main according to moral and religious life. Consequently, notwithstanding previous strong assertions of the latter view which we find in Deuteronomy, we need not be in the least surprised to find that here the hardships of the wilderness journey are regarded, not as a punishment for Israel's sins, but simply as a trial or test to see what their heart was towards Him. This is essentially the point of view of the Book of Job, the only difference being that here it is applied to the nation, there to the individual. But our chapter rises even above that, for the first verses of it plainly teach that the experiences of the wilderness were made to be what they were, in order that the people might learn to know the spiritual forces of the world to be the essential forces, and that they might be induced to throw themselves back upon them as that which is alone enduring. In the words of ver. 3, they were taught by this training that man does not live by bread alone, but by everything that proceeds from the mouth of God.

These two then, that hardship was testing discipline for Israel, and that it was also intended to be the means of revealing spirit as the supreme force even in the material world, are the main lessons of the eighth chapter. Of these the last is by far the most important. Casting back his eye upon the past, the author of Deuteronomy teaches that the trials and the victories, the wonders and

the terrors of their wilderness time were meant to humble them, to empty them of their own conceits, and to make them know beyond all doubting that God alone was their portion, and that apart from Him they had no certainty of continuance in the future and no sustainment in the present. "All the commandment which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, *that ye may live*," is the fundamental note, and the physical needs and trials of the time are cited as an object-lesson to that effect. "He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna which thou knewest not; that He might make thee to know that man doth not live by bread alone, but by everything that proceedeth out of the mouth of Yahweh doth man live." Of course the first reference of the "everything that proceedeth" is to the creative word of Yahweh. The meaning is that the sending of the manna was proof that the ordinary means of living, *i.e.* bread, could be dispensed with when Yahweh chose to make use of His creative power. Many commentators think that this exhausts the meaning of the passage, and they regard our Lord's use of these words in the Temptation as limited in the same fashion. But both here and in the New Testament more must be intended. Here we have the statement in the first verse that Israel is to keep the commandments, which certainly are a part of "all that proceeds" from the mouth of God, that they may *live*. This implies that the mere possession of material sustenance is not enough for even earthly life. Impalpable spiritual elements must be mingled with "bread" if life is not to decay. This, our chapter goes on to say, would be plain to them if they would carefully consider God's dealing with them in the wilderness, for the sending of the manna was meant to emphasise and bring home to them that very truth. It was meant, in short, to convey a double lesson—the direct one above referred to, and the

more remote but deeper one which had been asserted in the first verse.

In the Temptation narrative the same deeper meaning is surely implied. The temptation suggested to Jesus was that He should use the miraculous powers given to Him for special purposes to make stones into bread for Himself. Now that would have been precisely an instance of the literal primary meaning of our passage; it would have been a case of supplying the absence of bread by the use of the creative word of God. To meet that temptation and to put it aside our Lord uses these words: "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Thereupon He was no more importuned to supply the place of bread by a creative word. The implication is that the life of the Son of God found sustenance in spiritual strength derived from His Father. In other words, the passage is really parallel to John iv. 31 ff: "In the mean while the disciples prayed Him, saying, Rabbi, eat. But He said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not. The disciples therefore said one to another, Hath any man brought Him to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to accomplish His work." Understanding it thus, the Temptation passage is entirely in accord with that from which it is quoted, if the first and third verses be taken together. Both teach that abundance of material resources, all that visibly sustains the material life, is not sufficient for the life of such a creature as man. Not only his inner life, but his outer life, is dependent for its permanence upon the inflow of spiritual sustenance from the spiritual God. For animals, bread might be enough; but man holds of both the spiritual and the material as animals do not. It is not mere mythical dreaming when man is said to be made in the image of God; it expresses the essential fact

of his being. Consequently, without inbreathings from the spiritual, even his physical life pines and dies. But how wonderful is this insight in a writer so ancient, belonging to so obscure a people as the Jews! How can we account for it? There was nothing in their character or destiny as a people to explain it, apart from the supernatural link that binds them and their thoughts at all times to the coming Christ, and draws them, notwithstanding all aberrations, even when they know it not, towards Him.

How great an attainment it is we may see, if we reflect for a moment upon the state of Christian Europe at the present day. Nowhere among the masses of the most cultured nations is this deeply simple truth accepted by the vast majority of men. Nowhere do we find that history has succeeded in bringing it home to the conscience as a commonplace. The rich or well-to-do cling to riches, the means of material enjoyment, as if their life did consist in the abundance of things they possess. They strive and struggle for them with an industry, a forethought, a perseverance, which would be justified only if man could live by bread alone. That is largely the condition of those who have bread in abundance or hope to gain it abundantly. With those who do not have it the case is perhaps even worse. Worn and fretted by the hopeless struggle against poverty, driven wild by the exigencies of a daily life so near starvation point that a strike, a fall in prices, a month's sickness, bring them face to face with misery, the toiling masses in Europe have turned with a kind of wolfish impatience upon those who talk of God to them, and demand "bread." As a German Socialist mother said publicly some years ago, "He has never given me a mouthful of bread, or means to gain it: what have I to do with your God?" Their only hope for the future is that they may eat and be full; and of this they have made

a political and religious ideal which is attracting the European working classes with most portentous power.

In all countries men are passionately asserting that man *can* live by bread alone, and that he will. For this dreadful creed increasing numbers are prepared to sacrifice all that humanity thought it had gained, and shut their ears to any who warn them that, if they had all they seek, earth might be still more of a Pandemonium than they think it at present. But they have much excuse. They have never had wealth so as to know how very little it can do for the deepest needs of men; and their faith in it, their belief that if they were assured of a comfortable maintenance all would be right with the world, is pathetic in its simplicity. Yet the secret that is hid to-day from the mass of men was known among the small Israelite people two thousand five hundred years ago. Since then it has formed the very keynote of the teaching of our Lord; but save by the generations of Christians who have found in it the key to much of the riddle of the world it has been learned by nobody.

Yet history has never wearied in proclaiming the same truth. Israel as we have seen, had verified it in the history of the pre-Canaanite races whose disappearance is recorded in the first section of our book, and in the doom which was impending over the Canaanites. But to our wider experience, enriched by the changes of more than two thousand years, and by the still more striking vicissitudes of ancient days revealed by archæology, the fact that intelligence of the highest kind, practical skill, and the courage of conquerors cannot secure "life," is only more impressively brought home. If we go back to the pre-Semitic empire of Mesopotamia, to what is called the Akkadian time, we find that, before the days of Abraham, a great civilisation had arisen, flourished for more than one thousand years, and then decayed so

utterly that the very language in which its records were written had to be dealt with by the Semites, who inherited the former culture, as we deal with Latin. Yet these early people had made a most astonishing advance into the ocean of unknown truth. They had invented writing; they had elaborate systems of law and social life; they had in other directions made remarkable discoveries in science, especially in mathematical and astronomical science, and had built great cities in which the refinement and art of modern times was in many directions anticipated. In all ways they stood far higher above neighbouring peoples than any civilised nation of Europe stands now in comparison with its neighbours. But if they were at all inclined to put their trust in the immortality of science, if they ever valued themselves, as we do, on the strength of the advances they had made, time has had them in derision. Very much of what they knew had to be rediscovered painfully in later times. Their very name perished out of the earth; and it has been discovered now to make them an object of abiding interest only to the few who make ethnology their study. Neither material wealth and comfort nor assiduous culture of the mind could save them. For their religion and morals were, amid all this material success, of the lowest type. They heard little of what issues from the mouth of God in the specially Divine sphere of morality, and did not give heed to that little, and they perished. For man does not live by bread alone, but by that also, and neglect of it is fatal.

It may be said that they flourished for more than a thousand years, and neglect of the Divine word, if it be a poison, must (as Fénélon said of coffee) be a very slow one, so far as nations are concerned. But it has always been a snare to men to mistake the Divine patience for Divine indifference and inaction. The movement, though

to us creatures of a day it seems slow, is as continuous, as crushing, and as relentless as the movement of a glacier. "The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small," and all along the ages they have thrown out the crushed and scattered fragments of the powers that were deaf to the Divine voice. So persistently has this appeared that it would by this time have passed beyond the region of faith into that of sight, were it not always possible to ignore the moral cause and substitute for it something mechanical and secondary. The great world-empires of Egypt and Assyria passed away, primarily owing to neglect of the higher life. Secondarily, no doubt, the ebbs and flows of their power, and their final extinction, were influenced by the course of the Indian trade; and many wise men think they do well to stop there. But in truth we do not solve the difficulty by resting in this secondary cause; we only shift it a step backwards. For the question immediately arises, Why did the trade change its course from Assyria to Egypt, and back again from Egypt to Assyria? Why did a rivulet of it flow through the land of Israel in Solomon's day and afterwards cease? The answer must be that it was when the character of these various nations rose in vigour by foresight and moral self-restraint that they drew to themselves this source of power. They "lived," in fact, by giving heed to some word of God. Nor does the history of Greek supremacy in Europe and Asia, or the rise and fall of the Roman Empire, contradict that view. The modern historian, whatever his faith or unfaith may be, is driven to find the motive power which wrought in these stupendous movements in the moral and spiritual sphere. This transforms history from being merely secular into a Bible, as Mommsen finely says,[1] "And if she cannot any more

[1] *History of Rome*, vol. iv., Part II., p. 467.

than the Bible hinder the fool from misunderstanding and the devil from quoting her, she too will be able to bear with and to requite them both." She utters her voice in the streets, and in the end makes her meaning clear. For she gives us ever new examples.

Probably her grandest object-lesson at present is the wasting and paralysis that is slowly withering up all Mohammedan states. Where they have been left to themselves, as in Morocco and Persia, depopulation and the break-up of society has come upon them, and where Muslim populations are really prospering it is under the influence of Christian Powers. And the reason is plain. Islam is a revolt from, and a rejection of, the higher principles of life contained in Christianity, and a return to Judaism. But the Judaism to which it returned had already lost its finest bloom. All that was left to it of tenderness or power of expansion Islam rejected, and of the driest husks of Old Testament religion it made its sole food. Naturally and necessarily, therefore, it has been found inadequate. It cannot permanently live under present conditions, and it is capable of no renewal. Here and there, especially in India, attempts to break out of the prison house which this system builds around its votaries are being made, but in the opinion of experts like Mr. Sell[1] they cannot succeed. "Such a movement," he tells us, "may elevate individuals and purify the family life of many, but it will, like all reform movements of the past, have very little real effect on Islam as a polity and as a religion." If he be right, we learn from a Mohammedan whom he quotes, the Naual Mulisin-ul-Mulk, what alone can be looked for. "To me it seems," he says, "that as a nation and a religion we are dying out; our day is past, and we have little hope of the future." More

[1] *Contemporary Review*, August 1893 p. 293.

conspicuously and deliberately perhaps than any one did Mohammed choose to go back from the best light that shone in the world of his day. Some at least of his contemporaries knew what a spiritual religion meant. He was guilty, therefore, of the "great refusal"; and his work, great as it was, seems to some even of his own disciples to be hastening to its end. Material success, bread in all senses, the kingdoms founded by him and his successors had in abundance, and still might have. But man cannot live by that alone, and the absence of the higher element has taken even that away.

In Christendom, too, the same lesson is being taught. Of all European countries France perhaps is that where the corroding power of materialistic thought has been most severely felt. Yet few countries are so rich in material wealth, and if bread was all that "life" demanded, no country should be so full of it. But it is in no sense so. Even its intellectual life is drooping, and its population, if not decreasing, is standing still. This, all serious writers deplore; and the dawn of what may perhaps be a new era is seen in the earnestness with which the sources of this evil are sought out and discussed. Men like the Vicomte de Vogüé[1] depict the new generation as weary of negations, sick of the material positivism of their immediate predecessors, disgusted with "realism," which, as another recent writer defines it, "in thought is mere provincialism, in affection absolute egoism, in politics the deification of brute force; in the higher grades of society tyranny; in the lower, unbridled licence." And the only cure is faith and moral idealism. "Society can apply to itself to-day," says De Vogüé, "the beautiful image of Plotinus; it resembles those travellers lost in the night, seated in silence on the shore of the sea, waiting for the

[1] "*Heures d'Histoire.*"

sun to rise above the billows." In Germany similar conditions have produced similar though much mitigated results. Yet even there, Lange, the historian of materialism, tells us that there runs through all our modern culture a tendency to materialism, which carries away every one who has not found somewhere a sure anchor. "The ideal has no currency; all that cannot prove its claim on the basis of natural science and history is condemned to destruction, though a thousand joys and refreshments of the masses depend upon it." He concludes by saying that "ideas and sacrifices may still save our civilisation, and change the path of destructive revolution into a path of beneficent reforms." Through all history, then, and loudest in our own day, the cry of our passage goes up; and where the path marked out by the faith of Israel, and carried to its goal by Jesus Christ, has been forsaken, the peoples are resting in hungry expectation. Words from the mouth of God can alone save them; and if the Churches cannot make them hear, and no new voice brings it home to them, there would seem to be nothing before them but a slower or quicker descent into death.

But it may be that the nations are deaf to the Churches' voice because these have not learned thoroughly that life for them too is conditioned in the same fashion. They can live truly, fully, triumphantly only when they take up and absorb "everything that issues from the mouth of God." All Christians must admit this; but most proceed at once to annul what they have stated by the limitations of meaning they impose upon it. An older generation vehemently affirmed this faith, meaning by it every word and letter which Scripture contained. We do not find fault with what they assert, for the first necessity of spiritual life is the study and love of the Holy Scriptures. No one who knows what the higher life in Christ is, needs

to be told that the very bread of life is in the Bible. Neglect it, or, what is perhaps worse, study it only from the scientific and intellectual point of view, and life will slowly ebb away from you, and your religion will bring you none of the joy of living. Bring your thoughts, your hopes, your fears, and your aspirations into daily contact with it, and you will feel a vigour in your spiritual nature which will make you "lords over circumstance." Every part of it contributes to this effect when it is properly understood, for experience proves the vanity of the attempt to distinguish between the Bible and the word of God. As it stands, wrought into one whole by labours the strenuousness, the multiplicity, the skill, and the religious spirit of which we are only now coming to understand, it is the word of God; it has issued from His mouth, and from it, searched out and understood, the most satisfying "bread" of the soul must come. Only by use of it can the Christian soul live. But though the Bible is the word of God *par excellence*, it is not the only word that issues from the mouth of God to man. Because the Church has often too much refused to listen to any other word of God, those who are without are "sitting looking out over the sea towards the west for the rising of the sun which is behind them." For if it is death to the spirit to turn away from Scripture, it means sickness and disease to refuse to learn the other lessons which are set for us by the God of truth. All true science must contain a revelation of Him, for it is an exposition of the manner of His working. History too is a Bible, which has been confirming with trumpet tongue the truths of Scripture as we have seen. Nay, it is a commentary upon the special revelation given to us through Israel, set for our study by the Author of that revelation. Further, we may say that the progress of our Christian centuries has shown us heights and depths of wisdom in the revelation mankind

has received in Christ which, without its light, we should not have known.

The spirit of Christ in regard to slavery, for instance, was made manifest fully only in our day. The true relations of men to each other, as conceived by our blessed Lord, are evidently about to be forced home upon the world by the turmoils, the strikes, and the outrages, by the wild demands, and the wilder hopes which are the characteristic of our epoch. In the future, too, there must lie experiences which will make manifest to men the brand which the spirit of Christ puts upon war, with its savagery and its folly. These are only noteworthy instances of the explanation of revelation by the developments of the Divine purpose in the world. But in countless ways the same process is going on, and the Church which refuses to regard it is preparing a decay of its own life. For man lives by *every* word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, and every such word missed means a loss of vitality. The Christian Church, therefore, if it is to be true to its calling, should be seriously watchful lest any Divinely sent experience should be lost to it. It cannot be indifferent, much less hostile, to discoveries in physical science; it cannot ignore any fact or lesson which history reveals; it cannot sit apart from social experiments, as if holding no form of creed in such things, without seriously impairing its chances of life. For all these things are pregnant with most precious indications of the mind of God, and to turn from them is to sit in darkness and the shadow of death. In the most subtle and multifarious way, the inner spiritual life of man is being modified by the discoveries of scientists, historians, philologists, archæologists, and critics, and by the new attention which is being given to the foundations of society and social life. All the truth that is in these discoveries issues from the mouth of God. They too are a Bible, as

Mommsen says, and if the Christian Church cannot "hinder the fool from misunderstanding and the devil from quoting them," it can itself listen with open ear to these teachings, and work them into coherent unity with the great spiritual Revelation. This is the perennial task which awaits the Church at every stage of its career, for on no other terms can it live a healthy life.

Here we find the answer to timid Christians who address petulant complaints to those who are called to attempt this work. If, say they, these new thoughts are not essential to faith, if in the forms to which we have been accustomed the essence of true religion has been preserved, why do you disturb the minds of believers by outside questions? The reply is that we dare not refuse the teaching which God is sending us in these ways. To refuse light is to blaspheme light. Though we might save our generation some trouble by turning our back upon this light, though we might even save some from manifest shipwreck of faith, we should pay for that by sacrificing all the future, and by rendering faith impossible perhaps for greater multitudes of our successors.

Yet this does not imply that the Church is to be driven about by every wind of doctrine. Some men of science demand, apparently, that every new discovery, in its first crude form, should be at once adopted by the Church, and that all the inferences unfavourable to received views of religion, which occur to men accustomed to think only truths that can be demonstrated by experiment, should be registered in its teachings. But such a demand is mere folly. The Church has in its possession a body of truth which, if not verifiable by experiment, has been verified by experience as no other body of truth has been. Even its enemies being judges, no other system of a moral or spiritual kind has risen above the horizon which can for a moment be compared with Christianity as the guide

of men for life and death.[1] Through all changes of secular thought, and amid all the lessons which the world has taught the Church, the fundamental doctrines have remained in essence the same, and by them the whole life of man, social, political, and scientific, has ultimately been guided. Immense practical interests have therefore been committed to the Church's keeping, the interests primarily of the poor and the obscure. She ought never to be tempted, consequently, to think that she is moving and acting in a vacuum, or manage her affairs after the manner of a debating society. It is no doubt a fault to move too slowly; but in circumstances like that of the Church, it can never be so destructive to the best interests of mankind as to move with wanton instability. Her true attitude must be to prohibit no lines of inquiry, to open her mind seriously to all the demonstrated truths of science with gladness, to be tolerant of all loyal effort to reform Christian thought in accordance with the new light, when that has become at all possible. For her true food is everything that issues from the mouth of God; and only when she receives with gratitude her daily bread in this way also, can her life be as vigorous and as elevated as it ought to be.

[1] Cf. Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus*, vol. ii., pp. 510, 528.

CHAPTER XII

ISRAEL'S ELECTION, AND MOTIVES FOR FAITHFULNESS

DEUT. ix–xi.

THE remaining chapters of this special introduction to the statement of the actual laws beginning with chapter xii., contain also an earnest insistence upon other motives why Israel should remain true to the covenant of Yahweh. They are urged to this, not only because life both spiritual and physical depended upon it, as was shown in the trials of the wilderness, but they are also to lay it to heart that in the conquests which assuredly await them, it will be Yahweh alone to whom they will owe them. The spies had declared, and the people had accepted their report, that these peoples were far mightier than they, and that no one could stand before the children of Anak. But the victory over them would show that Yahweh had been among them like a consuming fire, before which the Canaanite power would wither as brush-wood in the flame.

Under these circumstances the thought would obviously lie near that, as they had been defeated and driven back in their first attempt upon Canaan because of their unrighteousness and unbelief, so they would conquer now because of their righteousness and obedience. But this thought is sternly repressed. The fundamental doctrine which is here insisted on is that Israel's consciousness of being the people of God must at the same time be a consciousness of complete dependence upon Him. If His

gifts were ultimately to be the reward of human righteousness, then obviously that feeling of complete dependence could not be established. They are to move so completely in the shadow of God that they are to see in their successes only the carrying out of the Divine purposes. Instead of feeling fiercely contemptuous of the Canaanites they destroy, because they stand on a moral and spiritual height which gives them a right to triumph, the Israelites are to feel that, while it is for wickedness that the Canaanite people are to be punished, they themselves had not been free from wickedness of an aggravated kind. Their different treatment, therefore, rests upon the fact that they are to be Yahweh's chosen instruments. In the patriarchs he chose them to become the means, the vehicle, by which salvation and blessing were to be brought to all nations. While, therefore, the evil that comes upon the peoples they are to conquer is deserved, the good they themselves are to receive is equally undeserved. That which alone accounts for the difference is the faithfulness of God to the promises He made for the sake of His purposes. He needs an instrument through which to bless mankind. He has chosen Israel for this purpose, partly doubtless because of some qualities, not necessarily spiritual or moral, which they have come to have, and partly because of their historical position in the world. These taken together make them at this precise moment in the history of the world's development the fittest instruments to carry out the Divine purpose of love to mankind. And they are elected, made to enter into more constant and intimate communion with God than other nations, on that account. In the words of Rothe, "God chooses or elects at each historical moment from the totality of the sinful race of mankind that nation by whose enrolment among the positive forces which are to develop the kingdom of God the greatest possible advance

towards the complete realisation of it may be attained, under the historical circumstances of that moment." Whether that completely covers the individual election of St. Paul, as Rothe thinks, or not, it certainly precisely expresses the national election of the Old Testament, and exhausts the meaning of our passage. Israelite particularism had universality of the highest kind as its background, and here the latter comes most insistently to its rights.

It was not only the election of Israel to be a peculiar people which depended upon the wise and loving purpose of God; the providences which befell them also had that as their source. To fit them for their mission, and to give them a place wherein they could develop the germs of higher faith and nobler morality which they had received, Yahweh gave them victory over those greater nations, and planted them in their place. This, and this only, was the reason of their success; and with scathing irony the author of Deuteronomy stamps under his feet (ix. 7 ff.) any claim to superior righteousness on their part. He points back to their continuous rebellions during the forty years in the wilderness. From the beginning to the end of their journey towards the promised land, they are told, they have been rebellious and stiff-necked and unprofitable. They have broken their covenant with their God. They have caused Moses to break the tables of stone containing the fundamental conditions of the covenant, because their conduct had made it plain that they had not seriously bound themselves to it. But the mercy of God had been with them. Notwithstanding their sin, Yahweh had been turned to mercy by the prayer of Moses (vv. 25 ff.), and had repented of His design to destroy them. A new covenant was entered into with them (chap. x.) by means of the second tables, which contained the same commands as were engraven on the first. The renewal, moreover,

was ratified by the separation of the tribe of Levi (x. 8 ff.) to be the specially priestly tribe, "to bear the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to minister unto Him and to bless in His name." From beginning to end it was always Yahweh, and again Yahweh, who had chosen and loved and cared for them. It was He who had forgiven and strengthened them; but always for reasons which reached far beyond, or even excluded, any merit on their part.

The grounds of Moses' successful intercession for them (ix. 25 ff.) are notable in this connection. They have no reference at all to the needs, or hopes, or expectations of the people. These are all brushed aside, as being of no moment after such unfaithfulness as theirs had been. The great object before his mind is represented to be Yahweh's glory. If this stiff-necked people perish, then the greatness of God will be obscured and His purposes will be misunderstood. Men will certainly think, either that Yahweh, Israel's God, attempted to do what He was not able to do, or that He was wroth with His people, and drew them out into the wilderness to slay them there. It is God's purpose with them, God's purpose for the world through them, which alone gives them importance. Were it not for that, they would be as little worth saving as they have deserved to be saved. For his people, and, we may be sure, for himself, Moses recognises no true worth save in so far as he or they were useful in carrying out Divine purposes of good to the world. Nor is the absence of any plea on Israel's behalf, that it is miserable or unhappy, due merely to a desire to keep the rebellious people in the background for the moment, and to appeal only to the Divine self-love for a pardon which would, on the merits of the case, be refused. It is the God of the whole earth, before whom "the inhabitants of the earth are as grasshoppers," who is appealed to;

a God removed far above the petty motives of self-interested men, and set upon the one great purpose of establishing a kingdom of God upon the earth into which all nations might come. If His glory is appealed to, that is only because it is the glory of the highest good both for the individual and for the world. If fear lest doubt should be cast upon His power is put forward as a reason for His having mercy, that is because to doubt His power is to doubt the supremacy of goodness. If the Divine promise to the patriarchs is set forth here, it is because that promise was the assurance of the Divine interest in and Divine love of the world.

Under such circumstances it would need a very narrow-hearted literalism, such as only very "liberal" theologians and critics could favour, to reduce this appeal to a mere attempt to flatter Yahweh into good-humour. It really embodies all that can be said in justification of our looking for answers to prayer at all; and rightly understood it limits the field of the answer as strictly as the expressed or implied limitations of the New Testament, viz. that effectual prayer can only be for things according to the will of God. Moreover it expresses an entirely natural attitude towards God. Before Him, the sum of all perfections, the loving and omniscient and omnipresent God, what is man that he should assert himself in any wise? When the height and the depth, the sublimity and the comprehensiveness of the Divine purpose is considered, how can a man do aught save fall upon his face in utter self-forgetfulness, immeasurably better even than self-contempt? The best and holiest of mankind have always felt this most; and the habit of measuring their attainments by the faithfulness and knowledge, the virtue and power which is in God, has impressed some of the greatest minds and purest souls with such humility, that to men without insight it ha

seemed mere affectation. But the pity, the condescension, the love of Christ has so brought God down into our human life, that we are apt at times to lose our awe of God as seen in Him. Were we children of the spirit we should not fall into that sin. We cannot, consequently, be too frequently or too sharply recalled to the more austere and remote standpoint of the Old Testament. For many even of the most pious it would be well if they could receive and keep a more just impression of their own worthlessness and nullity before God.

In the section from the twelfth verse of chapter x. to the end of chapter xi. the hortatory introduction is summed up in a final review of all the motives to and the results of obedience and love to God. The fundamental exhortation as to love to God is once more repeated; only here fear is joined with love and precedes it; but the necessity of love to God is expanded and dwelt upon, as at the beginning, with a zeal that never wearies. The Deuteronomist illustrates and enforces it with old reasons and new, always speaking with the same pleading and heartfelt earnestness. He does not fear the tedium of repetition, nor the accusation of moving in a narrow round of ideas. Evidently in the evil time when he wrote this love towards God had come to be his own support and his consolation; and it had been revealed to him as the source of a power, a sweetness, and a righteousness which could alone bring the nation into communion with God. In affecting words resembling very closely the noble exhortation in Micah vi., "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Yahweh require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" he teaches much the same doctrine as his contemporary: "And now, Israel, what doth Yahweh thy God require of thee, but to fear Yahweh thy God, to walk in all His ways, and

to love Him, and to serve Yahweh thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of Yahweh and His statutes which I command thee this day for thy good?"[1]

In spirit these passages seem identical; but it is held by many writers on the Old Testament that they are not so, that they represent, in fact, opposite poles of the faith and life of Israel. Micah is supposed by Duhm, for instance, to mean by his threefold demand that justice between man and man, love and kindliness and mercy towards others, and humble intercourse with God are, in *distinction from sacrifice*, true religion and undefiled. Robertson Smith also considers that these verses in Micah contain a repudiation of sacrifice. In Deuteronomy, on the contrary, fear and love of God and walking in His ways are placed first, but they are joined with a demand for the heartfelt service of God and the keeping of His statutes as about to be set forth. Now these certainly include ritual and sacrifice. The one passage, written by a prophet, excludes sacrifice as binding and acceptable service of God; the other, written perhaps by a priest, certainly by a man upon whom no prophetic lessons of the past had been lost, includes it. To use the words of Robertson Smith in discussing the requisites of forgiveness in the Old Testament, "According to the prophets Yahweh asks only a penitent heart and desires no sacrifice; according to the ritual law, He desires a penitent heart approaching Him in certain sacrificial sacraments."[2] The author of Deuteronomy teaches the second view; the author of Micah chap. vi., who is probably his contemporary, teaches the former. How is such divergence accounted for? The answer generally made is that

[1] Chap. x. 12.

[2] *Old Testament in Jewish Church*, 2nd edition, p. 308.

Deuteronomy was the product of a close alliance between priests and prophets. A common hatred of Manasseh's idolatry and a common oppression had brought them together as never perhaps before. With one heart and mind they wrought in secret for the better day which they saw approaching, and Deuteronomy was a reissue of the ancient Mosaic law adapted to the prophetic teaching. It represented a compromise between, or an amalgamation of, two entirely distinct positions.

But even on this view it would follow that from the time of Josiah, when Deuteronomy was accepted as the completest expression of the will of God, the doctrine that ritual and sacrifice as well as penitence were essential things in true religion was known, and not only known but accepted as the orthodox opinion. Putting aside, then, the question whether sacrifice was acknowledged by the prophets before this or not, they must have accepted it from this point onward, unless they denied to Deuteronomy the authority which it claimed and which the nation conceded to it. Jeremiah clearly must have assented to it, for his style and his thought have been so closely moulded on this book that some have thought he may have been its author. In any case he did not repudiate its authority; and all the prophets who followed him must have known of this view, and also that it had been sanctioned by that book which was made the first Jewish Bible.

We have here, at all events, the keynote of the supremacy of moral duty over Divine commands concerning ritual which distinguishes the prophetic teaching in Micah and elsewhere, joined with the enforcement of ritual observances. But there are few purely prophetic passages which raise the higher demand so high as it is raised here.

To love and fear God are anew declared to be man's supreme duties, and the author presses these home by arguments of various kinds. Again he returns to the

election of Israel by Yahweh, without merit of theirs; and to bring home to them how much this means, the Deuteronomist exhibits the greatness of their God, His might, His justice, and His mercy, which, great as it is to His chosen people, is not confined to them, but extends to the stranger also. This most gracious One they are to serve by deeds, to Him they are to cleave, and they are to swear by Him only, that is, they are solemnly to acknowledge Him to be their God in return for His undeserved favour. For their very existence as a nation is a wonder of His power, since they were only a handful when they went down to Egypt, and now were "as the stars of heaven for multitude."

Then once more, in chapter xi., he repeats his one haunting thought that love is to be the source of all worthy fulfilment of the law; and he endeavours to shed abroad this love to God in their hearts by reminding them once more of all the marvels of their deliverance from Egypt, and of their wilderness journey. Their God had delivered them first, then chastised them for their sins, and had trained them for the new life that awaited them in the land promised to their fathers.

Even in the security of the land they were to find themselves not less dependent upon God than before. Rather their dependence would be more striking and more impressive than in Egypt. As we have seen repeatedly, this inspired writer belonged in many respects to the childhood of the world, and the people he addressed were primitive in their ideas. Yet his thoughts of God in their highest flight were so essentially true and deep, that even to-day we can go back upon them for edification and inspiration. But here we have an appeal based upon a distinction which to-day should have almost entirely lost its meaning. The Deuteronomist yields quite simply and unreservedly to the feeling that the regular, unvarying

processes of nature are less Divine, or at least are less immediately significant of the Divine presence, than those which cannot be foreseen, which vary, and which defy human analysis. For he here contrasts Egypt and Canaan, in both of which he represents Israel as having been engaged in agricultural pursuits, and speaks as if in the former all depended upon human industry and ingenuity, and might be counted upon irrespective of moral conduct, while in the latter all would depend upon Divine favour and a right attitude towards God. It is quite true that in preceding chapters he has been teaching that, even for worldly material success, the higher life is necessary, that man nowhere lives by bread alone; and that we may assuredly assume is his deepest, his ultimate thought. But he has a practical end in view at this moment. He wishes to persuade his people, and he appeals to what both he and they felt, though in the last resort it might hardly perhaps be justified. In Egypt, he says, your agricultural success was certain if only you were industrious. The great river, of which the land itself is the gift, came down in flood year after year, and you had only to store and to guide its waters to ensure you a certain return for your labour. You had not to look to uncertain rains, but could by diligence always secure a sufficiency of the life-giving element. In Canaan it will not be so. It "drinketh water only of the rain of heaven." God's eye has to be upon it continually to keep it fertile, and the sense of dependence upon Him will force itself upon you more constantly and powerfully in consequence. They could hope to prosper only if they never forgot, never put away His exhortations out of their sight. Otherwise, he says, the life-giving showers will not fall in their due season. Your land will not yield its fruits, and "ye shall perish quickly off the good land which Yahweh giveth you."

Now what are we to say of this appeal? There can be no doubt that the Divine omnipotence was really, in the Deuteronomist's view as well as in ours, as irresistible in Egypt as in Canaan. Fundamentally, no doubt, life or death, prosperity or adversity, were as much in the hand of God in the one case as in the other; and the Deuteronomist, at least, had no doubt that rebellion against God could and would destroy Egypt's prosperity as much as Canaan's. But he felt that somehow there was a tenderer and more intimate communion of love between Yahweh and His people under the one set of circumstances than under the other. We are not entitled to impute to him a questionable distinction which modern minds are apt to make, viz. that where long experience has taught men to regard the course of providence as fixed, there the sphere of prayer for material benefit ends, and that only in the region where the Divine action in nature seems to us more spontaneous, and less capable of being foreseen, can prayer be heartily, because hopefully, made. But the feeling that suggests that was certainly in his mind. He felt the difference between the fixed conditions of life in Egypt and the more variable conditions in Canaan, to be much the same as the difference between the circumstances of a son receiving a fixed yearly allowance from his father, in an independent and perhaps distant home, and those of a son in his father's house, who receives his portion day by day as the result and evidence of an ever-present affection. Both are equally dependent upon the father's love, and both should theoretically be equally filled with loving gratitude. But as a fact, the latter would be more likely to be so, and would be held more guilty if he were not so. Upon that actual fact the Deuteronomist takes his stand. As they were now to enter into Yahweh's land, His chosen dwelling-place, he sees in the different material conditions of the new

country that which should make the union between Yahweh and His people more intimate and more secure, and He presses home upon them the greater shame of ingratitude, if under such circumstances they should forget God and His laws.

Finally (xi. 22-25) he promises them the victorious extension of their dominion if they will love Yahweh and keep His laws. From Lebanon to the southern wilderness, from the Euphrates to the western sea, they should rule, if they would cleave unto their God. At no time was this promise fulfilled save in the days of David and Solomon. For only then had Lebanon and the wilderness, the Euphrates and the sea, been the boundaries of Israel. This must, then, be regarded as the time of Israel's greatest faithfulness. But it is striking that it is in Josiah's day, after the adoption of Deuteronomy as the national law, that we meet with a conscious effort to realise this condition of things once more. There would seem to be little doubt that the good king took an equally literal view of what the book commanded and of what it promised. He inaugurated a period of complete external compliance with the law, and like the young and inexperienced man he was, he regarded that as the fulfilment of its requirements, and looked for a similar instantaneous fulfilment of the promises. Bit by bit he had absorbed the ancient territory of the Northern Kingdom; and in the decay of the Assyrian power he saw the opportunity for the enlargement of his dominion to the limit here defined. He consequently went out against Pharaoh Necho in the full confidence that he would be victorious. But if the Divine promise and its conditions were taken up too superficially by him, Divine providence soon and terribly corrected the error. The defeat and death of Josiah revealed that the reformation had not been real and deep enough, and that the nation was not faithful enough to

make such triumph possible. Indeed, so far as we can see, the time for any true fulfilment of Israel's calling in that fashion had then passed by. The harvest was past, and Israel was not saved, and could not now be saved, for it was in its deepest heart unfaithful.

It may be questioned by some, of course, whether an Israel faithful even in the highest degree could at any time have kept possession of so wide a dominion in the face of the great empires of Assyria and Egypt. These were rich, and had a far larger command both of territory and men: how then could the Israelites ever have maintained themselves in face of them? But the question is how to measure the power of the higher ideas they held. It is not force but truth that rules the world; and absolutely no limit can be set to the possibilities which open out to a free, morally robust, and faithful people, who have become possessed of higher spiritual ideas than the peoples that surround them. Even in this sceptical modern day the transformation as regards physical strength which takes place when certain classes of Hindus become either Mohammedans or Christians is so startling and so rapid that it appears almost a miracle. As regards courage, too, it is even more rapid and equally remarkable. The great majority of the struggles of nations are fought out on the level of mere physical force and for material ends, and the strongest and richest wins: but whenever a people possessed of higher ideas and absolutely faithful to them does appear, the opposing power, however great it may be in wealth and numbers, is whirled away in fragments as by a tornado, or it dissolves like ice before the sun. What Israel might have been, therefore, had it been penetrated by the principles of the higher religion, and been passionately true to it, can in no way be judged by that which it actually was. Among the untried

possibilities which it was too unfaithful to realise, the possession of such an empire as Deuteronomy promises would seem to be one of the least.

Our chapter sums up what precedes with the declaration on the part of Yahweh, "See, I am setting before you this day a blessing and a curse," according as they might obey or disobey the Divine command. It is stated, in short, that the whole future of the people is to be determined by their attitude to Yahweh and the commands He has given them. In these two words "blessing" and "curse," as Dillmann observes, He sets before them the greatness of the decision they are called upon to make. Just as at the end of chapter iii. the vision of Yahweh's stretched-out hand, which has strewn the world with the wrecks and fragments of destroyed nations, is relied on to prepare the people for contemplating their own calling, so here the gain or loss which would follow their decision is solemnly set before them. By Dillmann and others it is supposed that vv. 29 and 31, which instruct the people to "lay the blessing upon Mount Gerizim and the curse upon Mount Ebal," have been transferred by the later editor from chapter xxvii., where they would come in very fittingly after ver. 3. But whether that be so or not, they are evidently so far in place here that they add to the solemnity with which the fate of the nation in the future is insisted upon. Their "choice is brief and yet endless"; it can be made in a moment, but in its consequence it will endure.

But here a difficulty arises. Dr. Driver in his *Introduction* says of this hortatory section of our book that its teaching is that "duties are not to be performed from secondary motives, such as fear or dread of consequences; they are to be the spontaneous outcome of a heart from which every taint of worldliness has been removed, and which is penetrated by an all-absorbing sense of personal

devotion to God." Yet in these later chapters we have had little else but appeals to the gratitude and hopes and fears of Israel. Chapters viii. to xi. are wholly taken up with incitements to love and obey God, because He has been immeasurably good to them, never letting their ingratitude overcome His lovingkindness; because they are wholly dependent upon Him for prosperity and the fertility of their land; and because evil will come upon them if they do not. That would seem to be the opposite of what Driver has declared to be the informing spirit and the fundamental teaching of Deuteronomy.

Yet his view is the true one. Even if the Deuteronomist had added these lower motives to attract and gain over those who were not so open to the higher, that would not deprive him of the glory of having set forth disinterested love as the really impelling power in true religion. We are not required to lower our esteem of that achievement, even if, like the reasonable and wise teacher he is, he boldly uses every motive that actually influences men, whether it should do so or not, to win them to the higher life. But it is not necessary to suppose that he does so. His demand is that men shall love Yahweh their God with all their heart and strength, and to win them to that he sets forth what their God has revealed Himself to be. Men cannot love one whom they do not know; they cannot love one who has not proved himself lovable to them. As his whole effort is to get men to love God, and show their love by obedience to His expressed will, the Deuteronomist brings to mind all His loving thoughts and acts towards them, and so continually keeps his appeal at the highest level. He does not ask men to serve God because it will be profitable to them, but because they love God; and he endeavours to make them love God by reciting all His love and friendliness and patience to His people, and by pointing out the evil which His love is

seeking to ward off. The plea is not the ignoble one that they must serve Yahweh for what they can gain by it, but that they should love Yahweh for His love and graciousness, and that out of this love continual obedience should flow as a necessary result. That is his central position; and if he points out the necessary results of a refusal to turn to God in this way, he does not thereby set forth slavish fear or calculating prudence as in themselves religious motives. They are only natural and reasonable means of turning men to view the other side. He uses them to bring the people to a pause, during which he may win them by the love of God. That is always the true appeal; and Christianity when it is at its finest can do nothing but follow in this path. Having before his mind the results of evil conduct, he does urge men to escape from the wrath that may rest upon them. But the only means so to escape is to yield to the love of God. No self-restraint dictated by fear of consequences, no turning from evil because of the lions that are seen in the path, satisfies the demand of either Old Testament or New Testament religion. Both raise the truly religious life above that into the region of self-devoting love; and they both deny spiritual validity to all acts, however good they may be in themselves, which do not follow love as its free and uncalculating expression. Yet they both deal with men as rational beings who can estimate the results of their acts, and warn them of the death which must be the end of every other way of supposed salvation. In this manner they keep the path between extremes, ignoring neither the inner heart of religion nor winding themselves too high for sinful men.

How hard it is to keep to this reasonable but spiritual view is seen by popular aberrations both within and without the Church. At times in the history of the Church Christian teachers have allowed their minds to

be so dominated by the terror of judgment that judgment has seemed to the world to be the sole burden of their message. As a reaction from that again, other teachers have arisen who put forward the love of God in such a one-sided way as to empty it of all its severe but glorious sublimity; as if, like Mohammed, they believed God was minded mainly "to make religion easy" unto men. Outside the Church the same discord prevails. Some secular writers praise those religions which declare that a man's fate is decided at the judgment by the balance of merit over demerit in his acts; while others mock at any judgment, and commit themselves with a light heart to the half-amused tolerance of the Divine good-nature. But the teaching which combines both elements can alone sustain and bear up a worthy spiritual life. To rely upon terror only, is to ignore the very essence of true religion and the better elements in the nature of man; for that *will* not be dominated by fear alone. To think of the Divine love as a lazy, self-indulgent laxity, is to degrade the Divine nature, and to forget that the possibility of wrath is bound up in all love that is worthy of the name.

One other point is worthy of remark. In these chapters, which deal with the history of God's chosen people in their relations with Him, there come out the very elements which distinguish the personal religion of St. Paul. The beginning and end of it all is the free grace of God. God elected His people that they might be His instrument for blessing the world, not because of any goodness in them, for they were perverse and rebellious, but because He had so determined and had promised to the fathers. He had delivered them from the bondage of Egypt by His mighty power, and dwelt among them thenceforth as among no other people. He gave them a land to dwell in, and there as in His own house He watched and tended them, and strove to lead them upwards to the height of

their calling as the people of God by demanding of them faith and love. It is a very enlightening remark of Robertson Smith's that the deliverance out of Egypt was to Israel in the Old Testament what conversion is to the individual Christian according to the New Testament. Taking that as our starting-point, we see that the thought of Deuteronomy is precisely the thought of Romans. It is said, and truly enough, that the Pauline theology was a direct transcript of Paul's own experience; but we see from this that he did not need to form the moulds for his own fundamental thoughts. Long before him the author of Deuteronomy had formed these, and they must have been familiar to every instructed Jew. But the recognition of this is not a loss but a gain. If St. Paul had founded a theory of the universal action of God upon the soul only on the grounds of his own very peculiar experience, it might be argued that the basis of his teaching had been too personal to permit us to feel sure that his view was really as exhaustive as he thought. We see, however, that what he experienced the Deuteronomist had long before traced in the history of his people; and most probably he would not have traced it with so firm a hand had he not himself had experience of a similar kind in his personal relations with God. This method of conceiving the relation of God to the higher life of man, therefore, is stated by the Scriptures as normal. The free grace of God is the source and the sustainer of all spiritual life, whether in individuals or communities. Ultimately, behind all the successful or unsuccessful efforts of the human heart and will, we are taught to see the great Giver, waiting to be gracious, willing that all men should be saved, but acting with the strangest reserves and limitations, choosing Israel among the nations, and even within Israel choosing *the* Israel in whom alone the promises can be realised. Made to serve by human sin, He waits upon the caprices of the

wills He has created. He does not force them; but with compassionate patience He builds up His Holy Temple of such living stones as offer themselves, and "without haste as without rest" prepares for the consummation of His work in the redemption of a people that shall be all prophets, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation unto whom all nations shall join themselves when they see that God is in them of a truth. That is the Old Testament conception of the source, and guarantee, and goal of all spiritual life in the world, and St. Paul's view is merely a more mature and definite form of the same thing. And wherever spiritual life has manifested itself with unusual power, the same consciousness of utter unworthiness on the part of man, and entire dependence upon the grace and favour of God, has also manifested itself. The intellectual difficulties connected with this view, great as they are, have never suppressed it; the pride of man and his faith in himself have not been able permanently to obscure it. The greater men are, the more entirely do they dread any approach to that self-exaltation which puts away as unnecessary the Divine hand stretched out to them. As Dean Church points out,[1] "not Hebrew prophets only, but the heathen poets of Greece looked with peculiar and profound alarm upon the haughty self-sufficiency of men." Nothing can, they think, ward off evil from the man who makes the mistake of supposing, even when carrying out the Divine will, that he needs only his own strength of brain and will and arm to succeed, that he is accountable to no one for the character which he permits success to build up within him.

Even the agnostic of to-day, as represented by Professor Huxley, cannot do without some modicum of "grace" in his conception of man's relation to the powers of nature,

[1] *Cathedral Sermons*, p. 26.

though to admit this is to run a rift of inconsistency through his whole system of thought. "Suppose," he says in his *Lay Sermons*, "it were perfectly certain that the life and future of every one of us would, one day or other, depend on his winning or losing a game at chess. . . . The chessboard is the world, the pieces are the phenomena of the universe, the rules of the game are what we call the laws of nature. The player on the other side is hidden from us. We know that his play is always fair, just, patient. But we know to our cost that he never overlooks a mistake, or makes the smallest allowance for ignorance. To the man who plays well the highest stakes are paid with that overflowing generosity with which the strong shows delight in strength, and one who plays ill is checkmated without haste, but without remorse. My metaphor will remind you of the famous picture in which the Evil One is depicted playing a game of chess with man for his soul. Substitute for the mocking fiend in that picture a calm, strong angel, playing, as we say, for love, and who would rather lose than win, and I should accept it as the image of human life." Even in a world without God, therefore, the facts of life suggest "justice," "patience," "generosity," and a pity which "would rather lose than win." With all the inexorable rigour and hardness of man's lot there is mingled something that suggests "grace" in the power that rules the world; and from the Deuteronomist to St. Paul, from Augustine to Calvin and Professor Huxley, the resolutely thorough thinkers have found, in the last analysis, these two elements, the rigour of law and the election of grace, working together in the moulding of mankind.

The statement of these facts in Deuteronomy is as thorough as any that succeeded it. The rigour of law could not be more precisely and pathetically declared than in this insistence on the blessing or the curse which

must inevitably follow right choice or wrong. But the tenderness of grace could not be more attractively displayed than in this picture of Yahweh's dealings with Israel. Love never faileth here, no more than elsewhere. It persists, notwithstanding stiff-necked rebellion, and in spite of coarse materialism of nature. Even a childish fickleness, more utterly trying than any other weakn ss or defect, cannot wear it out. But inexorable blessing or curse is blended with it, and helps to work out the final result for Israel and mankind. That is the manner of the government of God, according to the Scriptures. History in its long course as known to us now confirms the view; and the author of Deuteronomy, in thus blending love and law together in the end of this great exhortation, has rested the obligation to obedience on a foundation which cannot be moved.

CHAPTER XIII

LAW AND RELIGION

DEUT. xii.-xxvi.

WITH this section (chapters xii.—xxvi.) we have at length reached the legislation to which all that has gone before is, in form at least, a prelude. But in its general outline this code, if it can be so called, has a very unexpected character. When we speak of a code of laws in modern days, what we mean is a series of statutes, carefully arranged under suitable heads, dealing with the rights and duties of the people, and providing remedies for all possible wrongs. Then behind these laws there is the executive power of the Government, pledged to enforce them, and ready to punish any breaches of them which may be committed. In most cases, too, definite penalties are appointed for any disregard or transgression of them. Each word has been carefully selected, and it is understood that the very letter of the laws is to be binding. Every one tried by them knows that the exact terms of the laws are to be pressed against him, and that the thing aimed at is a rigorous, literal enforcement of every detail. Tried by such a conception, this Deuteronomic legislation looks very extraordinary and unintelligible.

In the first place, there is very little of orderly sequence in it. Some large sections of it have a consecutive character; but there is no perceptible order in the succession of these sections, and there has been very little attempt

to group the individual precepts under related heads. Moreover in many sections there is no mention of a penalty for disobedience, nor is there any machinery for enforcing the prescriptions of the code. There is, too, much in it that seems rather to be good advice, or direction for leading a righteous life, a life becoming an Israelite and a servant of Yahweh, than law. For instance, such a prescription as this, "If there be with thee a poor man, one of thy brethren, within any of thy gates, in thy land which Yahweh thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother," can in no sense be treated as a law, in the hard technical sense of that word. It stands exactly on a level with the exhortations of the New Testament, *e.g.* "Be not wise in your own conceits," "Render to no man evil for evil," and rather sets up an ideal of conduct which is to be striven after than establishes a law which must be complied with. There is no punishment prescribed for disobedience. All that follows if a man do harden his heart against his poor brother is the sting of conscience, which brings home to him that he is not living according to the will of God. In almost every respect, therefore, this Deuteronomic code differs from a modern code, and in dealing with it we must largely dismiss the ideas which naturally occur to us when we speak of a code of laws. Our conception of that is, clearly, not valid for these ancient codes; and we need not be surprised if we find that they will not bear being pressed home in all their details, as modern codes must be, and are meant to be. Great practical difficulties have arisen in India, Sir Henry Maine assures us, from applying the ideas of Western lawyers to the ancient and sacred codes of the East. He says that the effect of a procedure under which all the disputes of a community must be referred to regular law-courts is to stereotype ascertained usages, and to treat

the oracular precepts of a sacred book as texts and precedents that must be enforced. The consequence is that vague and elastic social ordinances, which have hitherto varied according to the needs of the people, become fixed and immutable, and an Asiatic society finds itself arrested and, so to speak, imprisoned unexpectedly within its own formulas. Inconsistencies and contradictions, which were never perceived when these laws were worked by Easterns, who had a kind of instinctive perception of their true nature, became glaring and troublesome under Western rule, and much unintentional wrong has resulted. May it not be that the same thing has happened in the domain of literature in connection with these ancient Hebrew laws? Discrepancies, small and great, have been the commonplace of Pentateuch criticism for many years past, and on them very far-reaching theories have been built. It may easily be that some of these are the result rather of our failure to take into account the elastic nature of Asiatic law, and that a less strained application of modern notions would have led to a more reasonable interpretation.

But granting that ordinary ancient law is not to be taken in our rigorous modern sense, yet the fact that what we are dealing with here is Divine law may seem to some to imply that in all its details it was meant to be fulfilled to the letter. If not, then in what sense is it inspired, and how can we be justified in regarding it as Divinely given? The reply to that is, of course, simply this, that inspiration makes free use of all forms of expression which are common and permissible at the time and place at which it utters itself. From all we know of the Divine methods of acting in the world, we have no right to suppose that in giving inspired laws God would create entirely new and different forms for Himself. On the contrary, legislation in ancient Israel, though Divine in its source, would naturally take the ordinary forms of

ancient law. Moreover in this case it could hardly have been otherwise. As has already been pointed out, a large part of the Mosaic legislation must have been adopted from the customs of the various tribes who were welded into one by Moses. It cannot be conceived that the laws against stealing, for example, the penalties for murder, or the prescriptions for sacrifice, can have been first introduced by the great Lawgiver. He made much ancient customary law to be part and parcel of the Yahwistic legislation by simply taking it over. If so, then all that he added would naturally, as to form, be moulded on what he found pre-existing. Consequently we may apply to this law, whether Divinely revealed or adopted, the same tests and methods of interpretation as we should apply to any other body of ancient Eastern law.

Now of ancient Eastern codes the laws of Manu are the nearest approach to the Mosaic codes, and their character is thus stated by themselves (chap. i., ver. 107): "In this work the sacred law has been fully stated, as well as the good and bad qualities of human actions and the immemorial rule of conduct to be followed by all." That means that in the code are to be found ritual laws, general moral precepts, and a large infusion of immemorial customs. And its history, as elicited by criticism, has very interesting hints to give us as to the probable course of legal development in primitive nations. It is sometimes said that the results of the criticism of the Old Testament, if true, present us with a literature which has gone through vicissitudes and editorial processes for which literary history elsewhere affords absolutely no parallel. However that may be as regards the historical and prophetical books, it is not true with regard to the legal portions of the Pentateuch. The very same processes are followed in Professor Buhler's Introduction to his translation of the *Laws of Manu*, forming Vol. XXV. of *The Sacred Books*

of the East, as are followed in the critical commentaries on the Old Testament law codes. Pages lxvii. *seq.* of Buhler's Introduction read exactly like an extract from Kuenen or Dillmann; and the analysis of the text, with its resultant list of interpolations, runs as much into detail as any similar analysis in the Old Testament can do. Moreover the conjectures as to the growth of Manu's code are, in many places, parallel to the critical theories of the growth of the Mosaic codes. The foundation of Manu is, in the last resort, threefold—the teaching of the Vedas, the decisions of those acquainted with the law, and the customs of virtuous Aryas. At a later time the teachers of the Vedic schools gathered up the more important of these precepts, decisions, and customs into manuals for the use of their pupils, written at first in aphoristic prose, and later in verse. These, however, were not systematic codes at all. As the name given them implies, they were strings of maxims or aphorisms. Later, these were set forth as binding upon all, and were revised into the form of which the *Laws of Manu* is the finest specimen.

In Israel the process would appear to have been similar, though much simpler. It was similar; for though there are radical differences between the Aryan and the Semitic mind which must not be overlooked, the former being more systematic and fond of logical arrangement than the latter, a great many of the things which are common to Moses and Manu are quite independent of race, and are due to the fact that both legislations were to regulate the lives of men at the same stage of social advancement. But Manu was much later than Moses. Indeed, as we now have them, the laws of Manu are as late as the post-Ezraite Judaic code, and in temper and tone these two codes very nearly resemble each other. Consequently the earlier codes of the Pentateuch are simpler than Manu. When Israel left Egypt, custom must have been almost

alone the guide of life. Moses' task was to promulgate and force home his fundamental truths; in this view he must adopt and remodel the customary law so as to make it innocuous to the higher principles he introduced, or even to make it a vehicle for the popularising of them. So far as he made codes, he would make them with that end. Consequently he would take up mainly such prominent points as were most capable of being, or which most urgently needed to be, moralised, leaving all the rest to custom where it was harmless. This is the reason, too, most probably, why the earlier codes are so short and so unsystematic. They are selections which needed special attention, not complete codes covering the whole of life. In fact the form and contents of all the Old Testament codes can be accounted for only on this supposition. As the codes lengthen, they do so simply by taking up, in a modified or unmodified form, so much more of the custom; and under the pressure of Yahwistic ideas these selected codes became more and more weighted with spiritual significance and power.

That would seem to have been the process by which the inspired legislators of Israel did their work; and if it be so, some of the variations which are now taken to be certain indications of different ages and circumstances may simply represent local varieties of the same custom. Custom tends always to vary with the locality within certain narrow limits. It would be quite in accord with the general character of ancient customary law to believe that, provided the law was on the whole observed, there would be no inclination to insist upon excluding small local variations; and equally so that in a collection like the Pentateuch the custom of one locality should appear in one place, that of another in another. In that case, to insist that a certain sacrifice, for example, shall always consist of the same number of animals, and that any

variation means a new and later legislation on the subject, is only to make a mistake. The discrepancy is made important only by applying modern English views of law to ancient law. Professor A. B. Davidson has shown in the Introduction to his *Ezekiel* (p. liii.) that this latter was probably Ezekiel's view. "On any hypothesis of priority," he says, "the differences in details between him (*i.e.* Ezekiel) and the law (*i.e.* P) may be easiest explained by supposing that, while the sacrifices in general and the ideas which they expressed were fixed and current, the particulars, such as the kind of victims and the number of them, the precise quantity of meal, oil, and the like, were held non-essential and alterable when a change would better express the idea." The same principle would apply to the differences between Ezekiel and Deuteronomy, *e.g.* the omission of the feast of weeks and of the law of the offering of the firstlings of the flock. If so, then obviously Ezekiel must have thought that the previous ritual law was not meant to be as binding as we make it.

But, as has already been remarked, this law was elastic in more important matters; often, even when it seems to legislate, it is only setting up ideals of conduct. Before we leave this subject an example should be given, and the law of war may serve, especially if we compare it with the corresponding section of Manu. The provisions in Deuteronomy chap. xx. according to which on the eve of a battle the officers should proclaim to the army that any man who had built a new house and had not dedicated it, or who had planted a vineyard and had not yet used the fruit of it, or who had betrothed a wife and not yet taken her, or who was afraid, should retire from the danger, as also the provisions that forbid the destruction of fruit-trees belonging to a besieged city, cannot have been meant as absolute laws. Yet that is no ground for supposing that they could have been introduced only after Israel,

having ceased to be a sovereign state, waged no war, and that consequently they are interpolations in the original Deuteronomy. For the similar provisions of the laws of Manu were given while kings reigned, and were addressed to men constantly engaged in war. Yet this is what we find: "When he (the king) fights with his foes in battle, let him not strike with weapons concealed (in wood), nor with (such as are) barbed, poisoned, or the points of which are blowing with fire. Let him not strike one who (in flight) has climbed on an eminence, nor a eunuch, nor one who joins the palms of his hands (in supplication), nor one (who flees) with flying hair, nor one who sits down, nor one who says 'I am thine,' nor one who sleeps, nor one who has lost his coat of mail, nor one who is naked, nor one who is disarmed, nor one who looks on without taking part in the fight, nor one who is fighting with another foe, nor one whose weapons are broken, nor one afflicted (with sorrow), nor one who has been grievously wounded, nor one who is in fear, nor one who has turned to flight; but in all these cases let him remember the duty (of honourable warriors)." With an exact and unremitting obligation to observe these precepts war would be impossible, and we may be sure that in neither case were they meant in that sense. They simply set forth the conduct which a chivalrous soldier would desire to follow, and would on fitting occasions actually follow; but by no means what he must do, or else break with his religion. Only by hypotheses like these can the form and the character of such laws be properly explained, and if we keep them constantly in mind, some at least of the difficulties which result from a comparison of the law and the histories may be mitigated.

Such being the character of the Deuteronomic code, the question has been raised whether its introduction and acceptance by Josiah was not a falling away from the

spirituality of ancient religion. Many modern writers, supported by St. Paul's *dicta* concerning the law, say that it was. Indeed the very mention of law seems to depress writers on religion in these days, and Deuteronomy appears to be to them a name of fear. But whatever tendencies of modern thinking may have brought this about, it is nevertheless true that experience embodied in custom and law is the kindly nurse, not the deadly enemy, of moral and spiritual life. Without law a nation would be absolutely helpless; and it is inconceivable that at any stage of Israel's history they were without this guide and support. As we have seen, they never were. First they had customary law; then along with that short special codes, *e.g.* the Book of the Covenant and the Deuteronomic code; and even when the whole Pentateuchal law as we have it had been elaborated, a good deal must still have been left to custom. Consequently there was nothing so startling and revolutionary in the introduction of Deuteronomy as many have combined to represent. Indeed it is difficult to see how it altered anything in this respect. Of all forms of law, customary law is perhaps that which demands and receives most unswerving obedience. Under it, therefore, the pressure of law was heavier than it could be in any other form. It does not appear how the fact that those observing it did not think of that which they obeyed as law, but simply custom, altered the essential nature of their relation to it. They were guided by ordinances which did not express their own inward conviction, and were not a product of their own thought. They obeyed ordinances from without, and these ought therefore to have had the same effect upon the moral and spiritual life as written laws. For they cannot be said to have regulated only civil life. Religious life (even if the Book of the Covenant be Mosaic or sub-Mosaic, as I believe; much more if it be post-Davidic, as

many say) must have been largely regulated by the customs of Israel. If law then be in its own nature, as the antinomians tell us, destructive of spontaneity and progress, if it necessarily externalises religion, then there would have been as little room for the religion of the prophets before Deuteronomy as after it.

But, as a matter of fact, no falling off in spirituality took place after Deuteronomy. Wellhausen says that with law freedom came to an end, and this was the death of prophecy. But he can support his thesis only by denying the name of prophet to all the prophets after Jeremiah. It is difficult to see the basis of such a distinction. It is judged by this, if by nothing else—that it compels Wellhausen to deny that the author of Second Isaiah is a prophet. That he wrote anonymously is held to prove that he felt this himself. Now a view so extraordinarily superficial has no root, and every reader of that most touching and sublime of all the Old Testament books will simply stand amazed at the depth of the critical prejudice which could dictate such a judgment. If the post-Deuteronomic prophets are not prophets, then there are no prophets at all, and the whole discussion becomes a useless logomachy. But even if Ezekiel and Second Isaiah and the rest are not prophets, they are at least full of spiritual life and power, so that the decay of spiritual religion which the adoption of Deuteronomy is supposed to have brought about must be considered purely imaginary on that ground also. And this contention is strengthened by the theories of the critical school themselves. If the bulk of the Psalms, as all critics incline to believe, or all of them, as some say, are post-exilic, then the first centuries of the post-exilic period must have been the most spiritually minded epoch in Israelite history. The depth of religious feeling exhibited in the Psalms, and the comprehension of the inwardness of man's true relation to

God by which they are penetrated, are the exact contrary of the externality and superficiality which the introduction of written law is said to have produced. So long as the Psalms were being written religious life must have been vigorous and healthy, and to date the beginnings of Pharisaic externalism from Josiah's day must consequently be an error.

After what has been said it is scarcely necessary to discuss Duhm's views of the opposition between prophecy and Deuteronomy. It will be sufficient to ask how the latter can have turned against prophecy, when it is in its essence an embodiment of prophetic principles in law, and was introduced and supported by prophets. But, it may be said, after all prophecy did decay, and ultimately die, and that too during the period after Deuteronomy. Is there not in that admitted fact a presumption that this law did work against prophecy? If so, then it is more than met by the fact that the decay of spiritual religion became noticeable only some centuries after this, and that the immediate effect of Deuteronomy was rather to deepen and intensify religion, and to keep it alive amid all the vicissitudes of the Captivity and Return. Moreover the break-up of the national life was sufficient to account for the slow decay and final cessation of prophecy. From the first, prophecy had been concerned with the building up of a nation which should be faithful to Yahweh. Its main function had been to interpret and to foretell the great movements and crises of national life—to read God's purpose in the great world-movements and to proclaim it. With Israel's death as a nation the field of prophecy became gradually circumscribed, and ultimately its voice ceased. Consequently, though in the main the final cessation of prophecy was connected with the rise of externalism in religion and with the great decay of spiritual life in the two or three centuries before Christ, the destruc-

tion of the nation would account for the feebleness of prophecy during a period when the inner spiritual life was flourishing as it flourished after Deuteronomy. Moreover, as religion became more inward and personal, prophecy, in the Old Testament sense, had less place. Though in New Testament times spiritual life and spiritual originality and power were more present than at any time in the world's history, prophecy did not revive. In the whole New Testament there is not one purely prophetic book save the Revelation, and that is apocalyptic more than simply prophetic; and though there was an order of prophets in the early Church, if they had any special function other than that of preachers their office soon died out. If then the denationalising of religion and its growth in individualism and inwardness in New Testament times prevented the revival of prophecy, we may surely gather that the same things, and not the introduction of written law, brought it to an end in the Old Testament.

Nor does St. Paul's judgment as to the meaning and use of law, in Galatians, when rightly understood, contradict this. No doubt he seems to say that the Mosaic law by its very nature as law is incompatible with grace, that it necessarily stands out of relation to faith, and that its principle is a purely external one, so much wages for so much work. Further, he clearly regards it as having been interpolated into the history of Israel between the promises given to Abraham and the fulfilment of them in the redemption by Christ, and as having served only to increase sin and to drive men thus to Christ. But when he says this he is replying mainly to the Pharisaic view of the law which was represented by the Judaizers, and finds himself all the more at home in refuting it that it was his own view before he became a Christian. According to that view, the whole law, both the moral and

ceremonial provisions of it, was necessary to obtain moral righteousness, and the mere doing of the legally prescribed things gave a claim to the promised reward. So interpreted, law had all the evil qualities he states, and stood in absolute hostility to grace and faith, the great Christian principles. The only difficulty is that St. Paul does not say, as we should expect him to do, that originally the law was not meant to be so regarded. He seems to admit by his silence that the Pharisaic view of the law was the right one. But if he does, he cannot have meant to include Deuteronomy. For there law is made to have its root and ground in grace. It is given to Israel as a token of the free love of God, and it is a law of life which, if kept, would make them a peculiar people unto God. Further, love to God is to be the motive from which all obedience springs, so that this law is bound up with both grace and faith. But the probability is that St. Paul admits the Pharisaic view only because it is that view with which alone he has to contend in the case in hand. For in Romans vii. he gives us quite another conception of the Mosaic law.[1] There he is thinking of it mainly from an ethical point of view, and he regards it as full of the Spirit of God, as a norm of moral life which not only continues to be valid in Christianity, but which finds in the Christian life the very fulfilment which it was intended to have. It presses home too the moral ideal upon the man with extraordinary power, and marks and emphasises the terrible divergence between his aspirations and his actual performance. This is a much higher office than that which he assigns to law in Galatians; and hence one gathers that he is not speaking in Galatians exhaustively and conclusively, but is condemning rather a way of regarding the Mosaic law with which he had once sympathised than that law in its own essential character. In its moral

[1] Ritschl's *Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung*, vol. ii., pp. 311ff.

aspects, as represented by the Decalogue, the law is of eternal obligation. From it comes the light which brings to the Christian that moral unrest and dissatisfaction which is one of God's Divinest gifts to His people. In this aspect, the law is holy and just and good: instead of favouring the critical view St. Paul leaves it without any fragment of real support.

Our conclusion is, therefore, that the antinomianism, which makes the acknowledgment of Deuteronomy by Josiah and his people the turning-point for the worse in the religious history of Israel, is unfounded. The nation had always been under law, and previous to Deuteronomy under even written law. This code was not in any previously unheard-of way made the law of the kingdom. Its very contents are conclusive against that view, for it contains much that could not be enforced by the State. Instead of trying to do by external means that which the persuasions of the prophets had failed to do, Josiah and his people did just what they would have had to do, when they became convinced that the prophetic principles ought to be carried out. They made an agreement to follow these Divine commands, these God-given principles, in actual life. But there is no hint that they regarded Deuteronomy as the sum of the Divine ordinances for the life of men. Indeed there are many references to other Divine laws; and the priestly oracle remained, after Deuteronomy as before it, a source of Divine guidance. Deuteronomy therefore did not destroy prophecy; the post-exilic Psalms are proof that it did not destroy spiritual life: and the Pauline view of the law, in at least one series of passages, coincides entirely with the view that law stated as it is stated in Deuteronomy may be one of the mightiest influences to mould, and enrich, and deepen, moral and spiritual life.

CHAPTER XIV

LAWS OF SACRIFICE

DEUT. xii.

IT is a characteristic of all the earlier codes of law—the Book of the Covenant, the Deuteronomic Code, and the Law of Holiness—that at the head of the series of laws which they contain there should be a law of sacrifice. Probably, too, each of the three had, as first section of all, the Decalogue. The Book of the Covenant and Deuteronomy undeniably have it so, and the earlier element which forms the basis of Lev. xvii.—xxvi. not improbably had originally the same form. If so, we may assume that the order of the precepts has in a measure been determined by the order of the commandments. On this account the laws for the cultus would naturally come first. For just as the first commandment is, "Thou shalt have no other god before Me," and the second forbids all idolatrous images, so the laws begin with provisions meant in the main to ward off idolatry. Israel's great calling was to receive and to spread the truth concerning God. That was the centre of the sacred deposit of Divine and revealed truth committed to that nation; and it is most instructive to see how, not only in historical statements, but even in the form in which early Israelite legislation is handed down to us, the Decalogue dominates all the details of it. It formulated in as concrete a shape as was possible the Divine demand that Israelites should love God and their

neighbour, and *therefore* the legislative provisions and statutes begin with ordinances dealing with sacrifice.

To us in modern times it may seem almost bathos to connect such an antecedent with such a consequent; but it seems so, only because we have difficulty in apprehending the meaning and importance of sacrifice in primitive religion. For sacrifice had in Israel a meaning and importance of its own, and a present value at every period, which in no way depended upon its typical or prophetic value as pointing forward to the sacrifice of Christ. It supplied the religious needs of men even apart from the clearness of their knowledge about its ultimate purpose. Sacrifice, especially in its simplest meaning, was in heathenism absolutely essential as a means of approach to God. To come before a great *man* without a gift was in ancient days an outrage. It was therefore inevitable that men should approach their gods in the same manner. Sacrificial gifts expressed the dependent's joy in a gracious lord, and also the homage and reverence due from a subject to a king. Further, as all good things were regarded as the gifts of the gods to their worshippers, the sacrifices conveyed thanks for good gifts received, and joined the gods and their worshippers by a common participation in the Divine gift which connected them as eaters at the same table. But sacrifices had a higher reach of expression even than that. As they were brought to the gods they were the symbols of the self-devotion of the offerer to the service of his god; and where there was need of propitiation because of offence consciously given, or offence felt by the deity for unknown reasons, these gifts took on in some measure a reconciling or propitiatory quality.

Now the Old Testament sacrifices had in them, unquestionably, all these elements: but as Yahweh was high above all heathen deities in moral character, they also took on a depth and intensity of meaning which they

could never have on the soil of heathen religious conceptions. Along this line of sacrificial ritual, therefore, all the spiritual emotions of Israel flowed; and to hold that sacrifice had no real place in the religion of Yahweh would be almost equivalent to saying that neither love, nor penitence, nor prayer, had any real place in it either. All these found utterance in sacrifice and along with it; and it has yet to be shown that they had any regular and acceptable utterance otherwise. To regulate sacrifice and keep it pure must, therefore, have been one chief means of guarding against the degradation of Yahweh to the level of the gods of the heathen.

But there is another and very important reason for it. Both in the days when Moses parted from his people, and also in the time of Manasseh, the people stood confronted by very special danger just at this point.

At the earlier period they were about to enter upon intimate contact with the Canaanites, their superiors in culture and in all the arts of civilised life, but corrupted to the core. Further, the Canaanite corruption was focussed in their religious rites and worship, and evil could not fail to follow if the people suffered themselves to be drawn into any participation in it. For if Professor Robertson Smith be right, the central point of ancient sacrifice was the communion between the god and his worshippers in the sacrificial feast. They became of one kin with each other and with the god, and this close relationship made the communication of spiritual and moral infection almost a certainty.

In Manasseh's day again it was natural that legislation on the same subject, and warnings of even a more solemn kind, should be repeated. A prophetic lawgiver writing at that date had before him, not only the possibility of evil, but actual experience of it. The laws and warnings of the earlier code had been defied and neglected. The

faith of the chosen people had been miserably perverted by contact with the Canaanites; the whole history of prophecy had been a struggle against corrupt and insincere worship; and now the monstrous sacrifices to Moloch and the invasion of Assyrian idolatry had degraded Yahweh and destroyed His people, so that scarce any hope of recovery remained. In bracing himself for one more struggle with this desperate corruption, the Deuteronomist naturally repeated in deeper tones the Mosaic warnings. The command utterly to uproot and trample under foot the symbols and instruments of Canaanite worship, he brings, from the less prominent place it occupies in the Book of the Covenant, to the first place in his own code. To break with that and all other forms of idolatry, utterly and decisively, had come to be the first condition of any upward movement. The degrading and defiling bondage to idolatry into which his people had fallen must end. With trumpet tongue he calls upon them to break down the Canaanite altars, dash in pieces their obelisks, and burn their Asherim with fire.

To some moderns it may seem that such excessive energy might, with better effect, have been expended upon the denunciation of moral evils, such as cruelty and lust and oppression, rather than of idolatry. We have grown so accustomed to the distinctions drawn by the Church of Rome, and in later times by the neo-classicists, between worshipping God through an image or a picture, or in any natural object or natural force, and the actual worship of the image or picture or natural object itself, that we have sophisticated our minds. But the author of Deuteronomy knew by bitter experience that such subtle, and, in great part, sophistical distinctions had no application to his people and his time. Their worst immoralities were, he knew well, rooted in their idol-worship. For idolatry in any form binds all that is

highest in man to the sphere of nature, *i.e.* of moral indifference. Just as a conception of God which rigorously separated Him from nature, which made His will the supreme impelling force in the world, and which conceived His essential attributes to be entirely ethical, was the fountain of the higher life in Israel, so a lapse into idolatry of any kind was the negation of it all. No doubt some moral life would have remained in Israel, even if the lapse had become universal. But, even at its best, this natural morality of self-preservation has no future and no goal. It does not lead the van of human progress; it merely comes after, to ratify the results of it. Only when social morality is taken up into a wider sphere than its own,—only when it is conceived as the path by which man can co-operate with a sublime purpose lying beyond himself,—can it maintain itself as the inspiration of human life, impelling to progress and guiding it.[1] Now, so far as history teaches, this energy of moral life has been attained only where the conception of God which makes moral perfection to be His essential nature has been accepted and cherished. But no natural religion can rise to that; hence idolatry must always be destructive of ethical religion. It must destroy faith in the moral character of God.

Further, it must destroy the moral character of man. In the last resort all idolaters are equally acceptable to their god, if only they bring the prescribed gifts and accurately perform the prescribed ceremonies. The lewd and the chaste, the cruel and the merciful, the revengeful and the forgiving, are all equally accepted when they sacrifice. Non-moral or positively immoral gods can care nothing about such differences. Of this fact and its results no man acquainted with the history of Israel could doubt. The main zeal of the prophets was at all

[1] Cf. Riehm, *Old Testament Theology*, p. 25.

times directed against those who were steeped in moral evil, but were zealous in all that concerned sacrifice, and against the amazing folly of a people who thought to bind the living God to their cause and their interests by mere bribes, in the shape of thousands of bullocks and ten thousand rivers of oil. This conception was bound up essentially with idolatry. But the evil of it was intensified in the Semitic idolatries with which Israel specially defiled itself. Their cruelty and obscenity were unspeakable. Now by Israel's idolatry Yahweh was made to appear tolerant of Moloch and Baal, as if they were equals. Every quality which the Mosaic revelation had set forth as essential to the character of Yahweh—His purity, His mercy, His truth—was outraged by the society which His worshippers in Manasseh's days had thrust upon Him. No reform, then, had the least chance of stability till the axe was laid at the root of this wide-spreading upas tree.

Deuteronomy, therefore, grapples first and grapples thoroughly with the evil, and strikes it a blow from which it was never to recover. The inspired writer repeats with new energy the old decrees of utter destruction against the Canaanite sanctuaries; for though these were for the most part no longer in Canaanite hands, the High Places still existed; and the principle of that old prohibition was more clamant for recognition and realisation than it had ever been in the history of Israel before.

Then he goes on to proclaim the new law, that no sacrifice should any longer be offered save at the one central sanctuary chosen by Yahweh. There is no such provision in the Book of the Covenant, and there is no hint in the legislation of Deuteronomy that its author knew of the Tabernacle and its sole right as a place of sacrifice. From beginning to end of the code he never mentions the Tabernacle nor the sacrifices there; and in the very

terms in which he permits the slaughter of animals for food in vv. 15, 16, and 20-25, though he obviously repeals a custom which has been embodied in the Priestly Code as a law (Lev. xvii. 3 ff.), he makes no reference to that passage. Consequently this at least may be said, that he may quite conceivably have been ignorant of Lev. xvii. 3 ff. In ignorance of it, he might write as he has done; and if not ignorant, it would be much more natural to refer to it. When we add to this negative testimony the positive testimony of verses 8 and 13, which we have already discussed in Chapter I., there would seem to be little room for doubt that the priestly law on this subject was not before the writer of Deuteronomy. Consequently we are justified in regarding this as the first written law actually promulgated on this subject. Hezekiah had attempted the same reform; but he had, so far as we know, neither published nor referred to any law commanding it, and his work was entirely undone. The Deuteronomist, more convinced than he that this step was absolutely necessary to complete the Mosaic legislation on idolatry, and filled with the same inspiration of the Almighty, completed it; and though a reaction followed Josiah's enforcement of this law also, its existence saved the life of the nation. Its principles kept the nation holy, *i.e.* separate to their God, during the Exile, and at the return they were dominant in the formation of the "congregation."

Certainly there is no lack of earnestness in the way in which these principles are urged. With that love of repetition which is a distinguishing mark of this writer, he expresses the commandment first positively, then negatively. Then he brings in the consequential alteration in the law regarding the slaughtering of animals for food. Again he returns to the command, explaining, enlarging, insisting, and concludes with a reiteration of

the permission to slaughter. Efforts, of course, have been made to show that this repetition is due to the amalgamation here of no fewer than seven separate documents! But little heed need be given to such fantastic attempts. It is, once for all, a habit of this writer's mind to shrink from no monotony of this kind. There is not one important idea in his book which he does not repeat again and again; and where repetition is so constant a feature, and where the language and thought is so consistent as it is here, it is worse than useless to assert separate documents. The writer's earnestness is sufficient explanation. He saw plainly that, so long as the provincial High Places existed and were popular, it would be impossible to secure purity of worship. The heathen conceptions of the Canaanites clung about their ancient sanctuaries, and, like the mists from a fever swamp, infected everything that came near. Inspection sufficiently minute and constant to be of use was impracticable; there remained nothing but to decree their abandonment. When the whole worship of the people was centred at Jerusalem, corruption of the idolatrous kind would, it was hoped, be impossible. There, a pious king could watch over it; there, the Temple priesthood had attained to worthier ideas in regard to sacrifice and the fulfilment of the law than the priests elsewhere. Josiah accordingly rigorously enforced this new law.

Such a change, aimed solely at religious ends, did not stop there. In many ways it affected the social life of the people; in vv. 15, 16, and 20, 24, the author meets one hardship connected with the new law, by allowing men to slay for food at a distance from the altar. According to ancient custom, no flesh could be eaten by any Israelite, save when the fat and the blood had been presented at the altar. During the wilderness journey there would be little difficulty regarding this. In the desert very

little meat is eaten; and so long as life was nomadic there would be no hardship in demanding that those who wished to make sacrificial feasts should wander towards the central place of worship rather than from it. It has been disputed whether there was in those days a tabernacle such as the Priestly Code describes; but there certainly was, according to the earliest documents, a tent in which Yahweh revealed Himself and gave responses. As we have seen, there must have been sacrifice in connection with it; and though worship at other places where Yahweh had made His name to be remembered was permitted, this sanctuary in the camp must have had a certain pre-eminence. A tendency, but according to the words of Deuteronomy nothing stronger than a tendency, must have shown itself to make this the main place of worship.

When the people crossed the Jordan into the land promised to the fathers, and had abandoned the nomadic life, great difficulty must have arisen. For those at a distance from the place where the Tabernacle was set up, the eating of meat and the enjoyment of sacrificial feasts would, by this ancient customary law, have been rendered impossible, if the attendance at one sanctuary had been obligatory. Only if men could come to local sanctuaries, each in his own neighbourhood, could the religious character of the festivals at which meat was eaten be preserved. The nature of men's occupations, now that they had become settled agriculturists, and the dangers from the Canaanites so long as they were not entirely subdued and absorbed, alike forbade such long and frequent journeys to a central sanctuary. The conquest must consequently at once have checked any tendency to centralisation that may have existed; and there is reason to believe that the acceptance of the Canaanite High Places as sanctuaries of Yahweh was in great part caused by the

demands of this ancient law concerning the "zebhach." In any case it must have helped to overcome any scruples that may have existed. But when the Tabernacle and Ark were brought to Zion, and still more when the Temple was built, the centripetal tendency, never altogether dead, must have revived. For there was peace throughout the land and beyond it. No danger from the Canaanites existed; and the political centralisation which Solomon aimed at, and actually carried out, as well as the superior magnificence of the Solomonic Temple and its priests, must have attracted to Jerusalem the thoughts and the reverence of the whole people. What Deuteronomy now makes law may have then first arisen as a demand of the Jerusalem priests. At all events, the very existence of the Temple must have been a menace to the High Places; and we may be sure that among the motives which led the ten tribes to reject the Davidic house, jealousy for the local sanctuaries must have been prominent.

But the separation of the ten tribes would only strengthen the claim of the Temple on Zion to be for Judah the one true place of worship. The territory ruled from Jerusalem was now so small that resort to the central sanctuary was comparatively easy. The glorious memories of the Davidic and Solomonic time would centre round Jerusalem. Any local sanctuaries would be entirely dwarfed and overshadowed by the splendour and the, at least comparative, purity of the worship there. Priests of local altars too must inevitably have sunk in the popular estimation, and even in their own, to a secondary and subordinate position, as compared with the carefully organised and strictly graded Jerusalem priests. Even without a positive command, therefore, the people of Judah must have been gradually growing into the habit of seeking Yahweh at Jerusalem on all more solemn religious occasions; and

though the High Places might exist, their repute in the Southern Kingdom must have been decreasing. Of course if a command was given in the Mosaic time which had been neglected, the tendencies here traced must have been stronger and more definite than we have depicted them. When the prophetic teachings of Isaiah which proclaimed Jerusalem to be "Ariel," the "sacrificial hearth," or "the hearth of God," were so wondrously confirmed by the destruction of Sennacherib's host before the city, the unique position of Zion must have been secured; and after that only those who were set upon idolatry can have had much interest in the High Places. Hezekiah's effort to abolish these latter is quite intelligible in these circumstances; and we may feel assured that, as Wellhausen says,[1] "The Jewish royal temple had early overshadowed the other sanctuaries, and in the course of the seventh century they were extinct or verging on extinction."

Along with this there must have grown up a measure of laxity in regard to the provision that all slaughtering for food should take place at the sanctuary. Many would doubtless go to Zion, many would continue to resort to the High Places, and a number, from a mere halting between two opinions, would probably take their "zebhachim" to neither. Consequently the law before us would by no means be so revolutionary as Duhm, for instance, pictures it. He says: "I do not know if in the whole history of the world a law can be pointed to which was so fitted to change a whole people in its innermost nature and in its outward appearance, at one stroke, as this was. The Catholic Church even has never by all her laws succeeded in anything in the least like it." But we have seen evidence of a very strong and continuous pressure to this point, at least in Judah. History during centuries had

[1] Wellhausen, *History*, p. 420.

justified and intensified it; so that in all probability the true worshippers of Yahweh found in the new law not so much a revolution as a ratification of their already ancient practice. To idolaters, of course, its adoption must have meant a cessation of their idolatry; but the change in the people and in their life would, though extensive, be only such as any ordinary reform would produce. Duhm overlooks altogether the very small territory which the law affected. A long day's walk would bring men from Jericho, from Hebron, from the borders of the Philistine country, and from Shechem and Samaria to Jerusalem. If Deuteronomy made a revolution, it must have been confined within the modest limits of substituting a whole for a half-day's journey to the Sanctuary.

Moreover it is a mistake to say that sacrifice at one central sanctuary "took religion away from the people," as Duhm says. If spiritual religion be meant, it ultimately brought religion more vitally home to them. For when the priestly system was fully carried out, the demands of household religion were met, as the post-exilic Psalms show, by the adoption of the practice of household prayer without reference to sacrifice, and finally by the institution of the synagogue. A more spiritual method of approach to God was substituted for a less spiritual in the remote places and in the homes of the people. And the public worship even gained. It became deeper, and more penetrated with a sense of the necessity of deliverance from sin. It is true, of course, that in the end Pharisaic legalism perverted the new forms of worship, as heathen externalism had perverted the old. But in neither case was the perversion a necessity. In both it was simply a manifestation of the materialistic tendency which dogs the footsteps of even the most spiritual religion, when it has to realise itself in the life of man. It is enough for the justification of the whole movement led by Josiah to

say that it held the Judæan exiles together; that it kept alive in their hearts, as nothing else did, their faith in God and in their future; and that on their return it gave them the form which their institutions could most profitably take. Further, under the forms of religious and social life which this movement generated, the true, heartfelt piety which the prophets so mourned the want of became more common than ever it had been before.

The establishment of the central altar as the only one was the main object of this law; but there is much to be learned from the very terms in which this is expressed. They breathe the same love for man and sympathy with the poor which forms one of the most attractive characteristics of our book. The gracious bonds of family affection, the kindly feeling that should unite masters and servants, the helpfulness which ought to distinguish the conduct of the rich to the poor, and above all the cheerful enjoyment of the results of honest labour, are to be preserved and sanctified even in the ritual of sacrifice. "Thou shalt rejoice before Yahweh in all that thou puttest thine hand unto," is here the motto, if we may so speak, of religious service. That, indeed, is to be made the opportunity for the discharge of all humane and brotherly duties; and the religious life is at its highest when the worshipper rejoices himself, and shares and sheds abroad his joy upon others. The love of God is here most intimately blended with love of the brethren. Masters and servants, slaves and free, the high and the low, are to be reminded of their equal standing in the sight of God, by their common participation in the sacrificial meals; and the poorest are to be permitted an equal enjoyment of the luxuries of the rich in these solemn approaches to Yahweh. The Deuteronomist here reaches the highest stage of religious life, in that he shows himself in nowise afraid of human joy. As we have seen, he knows the

value of austerity in religion. He is well enough aware that war against evil is not made with rose-water. But then he is equally far from the extreme of suspecting all affection not directly turned to God, of regarding natural gladness as a ruinous snare to the soul. This finely balanced, this just attitude to all aspects of life, is a most notable thing at this epoch in the history of the world, and considering the circumstances of the time it is little short of a marvel. It is true, of course, that the religion of Israel was always finely human. It could run into excesses, and was marked by many imperfections; but asceticism, the doctrine which holds pain and self-denial to be in themselves good, when it did intrude into Israel, always came from without. Nevertheless the heartiness and thoroughness with which all gracious human feelings and all kindly human relations are here taken up into religion is remarkable, even in the Old Testament. More, perhaps, than anything else in this book, it shows the sweetening and wholesome effect of demanding supreme love to God as man's first duty. "If any man come to Me and hate not his father and mother," says Christ, "he cannot be My disciple,"[1] and many purblind critics have found this to be a hard saying. But all who know men know, that when God in Christ is made so much the supreme object of love that even the most sacred human obligations seem to be disregarded in comparison, the human affection so thrust into the background is only made richer far than it otherwise could be.

[1] Luke xiv. 26.

CHAPTER XV

THE RELATION OF OLD TESTAMENT SACRIFICE TO CHRISTIANITY

BUT it may be asked, What is the relation of this Divinely sanctioned ritual law of sacrifice to our religion in its present phase? To that question various answers are being returned, and indeed it may be said that on this point almost all the main differences of Christians turn. The Church of Rome maintains in essence the sacerdotal view of the later Old Testament times, though in a spiritualised Christian shape, and to this the High Anglican view is a more or less pronounced return. The Protestant Churches, on the other hand, regard priests and sacrifices as anachronisms since the death of Christ. In that, for the most part, they regard the significance of sacrifice as being summed up and completed; and the present dispensation is for them the realisation in embryo of that which Old Testament saints looked forward to—a people of God, every true member of which is both priest and prophet, *i.e.* has free and unrestricted access to God, and is authorised and required to speak in His name. The interest of Protestant Christians, therefore, in priesthood and sacrifice in the Old Testament sense, though very great and enduring, has no connection with the continuation of sacrifice. They look upon the Old Testament ritual as wholly obsolete now. It was simply a stage in the religious development of the chosen people, and as such it has no claim to be continued among Christians.

By a curious allegorical process, however, some devout Protestants keep alive their interest in Old Testament ritual by finding in it an elaborate symbolism covering the whole field of evangelical theology. But this revivification of the old law is too arbitrary and subjective, as well as too improbable, to have an abiding place in Christianity. It is, moreover, useless for the guidance of life; for all that is thus ingeniously put into the Levitical ordinances is found more clearly and directly expressed elsewhere. The amount of religious symbolism in the earlier stages of Israelite religion is small, and very simple and direct. Even in the most elaborate parts of the Levitical legislation, *e.g.* in the directions regarding the Tabernacle, the purposely allegorical element is kept within comparatively narrow limits; and we may boldly say that the mind which delights in finding spiritual mysteries in every detail of the sacrificial ritual is Rabbinical rather than Christian. On the other hand we need not enter upon a discussion of the view held by "Modern" or Broad Church theologians and by Unitarians, that sacrifice was merely a heathen form taken over into Mosaism, that it had no special significance there, and that the ideas connected with it have absolutely no place in enlightened Christian theology. The Christianity which attaches no sacrificial signification to the death of Christ has, so far as I know, never shown itself to be a type of religion able to create a future, and it is only with types of Christianity that do and can live we have to do. Our question here therefore is limited to this, Which of the two types of view, the Roman Catholic or the Protestant, is truest to the Old Testament teaching?

Externally, perhaps, the evidence seems to favour the Roman Catholic position; for the prophets either directly say, or imply, that sacrifice shall be restored with new purity and power in the Messianic time. This is so patent

a fact that it led Edward Irving to say that it was the Old Testament economy that should abide, and that of the New Testament which should pass away. But the inner progress and development of Old Testament religion is quite as decisively on the other side. As we have seen, Old Testament piety had at the beginning almost no recognised expression save in connection with sacrifice, and the Exile first trained the people to faithfulness to God without it, sowing the seed of a religious life largely separate from the sacrificial ritual. Then the ordinance demanding sacrifice at one central altar, which, though introduced by Deuteronomy, was made the exclusive law only by the post-exilic community, furthered the growth of these germs, so that they produced the synagogue system. This completed the severance of the ordinary daily religion of the bulk of the people from sacrificial ritual, so far as that was attained within the limits of Judaism, and prepared the way for Pauline Christianity, in which all allegiance to ritual Judaism is cast off. Now, as between the external and internal evidence, there can be little doubt that the latter has by far the greater weight, especially as the external evidence can, perfectly well, be read in a different sense. The Old Testament promises that sacrifice should be restored may be held to have been fulfilled by the sacrificial death of Christ, which completed and filled up all that had gone before. In that case the evidence that sacrifice and ritual are now obsolete for Christians is left standing alone, and the Protestant view is justified.

And the case for this view is strengthened immeasurably by observing that the modern sacerdotalism has taken up as essential what was the main vice of sacrificial worship in the old economy. That was, as we have seen, the tendency to rest on the mere performance of the external rite, without reference to the disposition of the

heart or even to conduct. Rivers of oil and hecatombs of victims were thought sufficient to meet all possible demands on God's part, and against this the polemic of the prophets is unceasing. Now in almost all modern sacerdotalism the doctrine of the efficacy of sacraments duly administered, apart from right dispositions in either him who administers them or in him who receives them, has been affirmed. It is not now, as it was in the "old time," an evil tendency which had to be assiduously fought against, but which could not be overcome. It is openly incorporated in the orthodox teaching, and is distinctly provided for in the ideal of Christian worship. That marks a considerable falling away from the prophetic ideal: it can hardly be regarded as the appointed end of that great religious movement which the prophets dominated and directed for so long. The teaching of Deuteronomy certainly is, that wherever mere external acts are supposed to have power to secure entrance into the spiritual world of life and peace, there the character of God is misconceived and religion degraded. What it demands is the inward and spiritual allegiance of faithful men to God. What it depicts as the essence of religious life is a set of the whole nature Godward, as deep and irresistible as the set of the tides—

> "Such a tide as moving seems asleep,
> Too full for sound and foam."

Under no sacerdotal system can that view be unreservedly accepted, and therein lies the condemnation of every such system. So far as it is allowed to prevail, the force of the prophetic polemic has to be ignored or evaded, and in greater or less degree the same spiritual decay which the prophets mourned over in Israel must appear.

But it is not only where trust in the mere *opus operatum* is theoretically justified that it makes its baleful presence

felt. It may surreptitiously creep in where the door is theoretically shut against it. The tendency is very deep-seated in human nature; and many evangelical preachers, who repudiate all sacramentarianism, and throw the full emphasis of Christian religious life upon grace and faith, yet bring back again in subtler shape that very thing which they have rejected. For example, instead of the reception of the sacrament at the hands of ordained ministers, a man's acceptance with God is sometimes made to depend upon a declaration of belief that Christ has died for him, or that he has been redeemed and saved by Christ. Wherever such statements are forced upon men, there is a tendency to assume that a decisive step in the spiritual life is taken by the mere utterance of them. The motives which actuate the utterer are taken for granted; the existence of such a set of the spiritual nature to God as Deuteronomy demands is supposed to be proved by the mere spoken words; and men who cannot or will not say such things glibly are unchurched without mercy. What is that but the *opus operatum* in its most offensive shape? But in whatever shape it appears, the Deuteronomic demand for love to God, with the heart and soul and strength, as essential to all true spiritual service and sacrifice, condemns it. Love to God and men are the main things in true religion. All else is subordinate and secondary. Sacrifice and ritual without these are dead forms. That is the Deuteronomic teaching, and by it, once for all, the true relation of the cultus to the life is fixed.

Nevertheless the priestly and sacrificial system of the Old Testament has even for Christians a present importance, for it is an adumbration of that which was to be done in the death of Christ. It has an unspeakable value, when rightly used, as an object-lesson in the elements which are essential to a right approach to a Holy God

on the part of sinful men. Even in heathenism there were such foreshadowings; and nothing is more fitted to exalt our views of the Divine wisdom than to trace, as we can now do, the ways in which man's seekings after God, even beyond the bounds of the chosen people, took forms that were afterwards absorbed and justified in the redeeming work of our Blessed Lord. For example, Professor Robertson Smith says of certain ancient heathen piacular sacrifices, "The dreadful sacrifice is performed, not with savage joy, but with awful sorrow, and in the mystic sacrifices the deity himself suffers with and for the sins of his people and lives again in their new life." Now if we admit that he is not unduly importing into these sacrifices ideas which are really foreign to them, surely awe is the only adequate emotion wherewith a believer in Christ can meet such a strange prophecy, in the lowest religion, of that which is deepest in the highest.[1] The sacrificial system in general was founded, in part at least, on belief in the possibility and desirability of communion with God. In the sacrificial feasts this was supposed to be attained, and the essential religious needs of mankind found expression in much of the ritual. If the death of the god, and his returning to life again in his people found a prominent place in piacular sacrifices in various lands, that suggests that in some dim way even heathen men had learned that sin cannot be removed and forgiven without cost to God as well as to man, and that communion in suffering as well as in joy is a necessary element of life with God. The human heart, Divinely biassed, asserted itself in effort after such association with Deity, and in the feeling that sin was that element in life which it would make the highest demand upon the Divine love to set effectively aside.

[1] *Ency. Brit.*, vol. xxi., p. 138.

But if such preparation for the fulness of the time was going on in heathenism, if the mind and heart of man, driven forward by Divinely ordered experience and its own needs, could produce such forecasts in the ritual of heathen religion, we surely must admit that the religious ritual in Israel had an even more intimate connection with that which was to come. For we claim that in guiding the destinies of Israel God was, in an exceptional manner, revealing Himself, that among them He established the true religion, unfolded it in their history, and prepared as nowhere else for the advent of Him who should make real and objective the union of God and man. Here consequently, if anywhere, we should expect to find the permanent factors in religion recognised even in the forms of worship, and the less permanent allowed to fall away. We should also expect the ritual of the cultus to grow in depth of meaning with time, and that it would more and more recognise the moral and spiritual elements in life. Finally, we should expect that it would be the parent of conceptions rising above and beyond itself, and more fully consonant with the revelation given by Christ than anything in heathenism.

Now all these expectations would seem to have been fulfilled; and it is reasonable to assume that those sacrificial ideas which corresponded to the deepened consciousness of sin, and synchronised apparently with the decay of Israel's political independence, are rightly applied to the elucidation of the meaning of Christ's death. Of course mistakes may be and have been made in the application of this principle; the most common being that of forcing every detail of the imperfect and temporary provision into the interpretation of the perfect and eternal. Sometimes, too, the significance of the life and coming of Christ are obscured by a too exclusive attention to His sacrificial death. But the principle in itself must be sound, if Chris-

tianity is in any sense to be regarded as the completion and full development of the Old Testament religion. Besides the immediate significance of sacrifice which the worshippers perceived and by which they were edified, there was another significance which belonged to it as a step in the long progress which had been marked out for this people in the Divine purpose. Regarded from that standpoint, the sacrifices, and the ritual connected with them, had a meaning for the future also, were in fact typical of the final sacrifice which would need to be offered only once for all. How much of this was understood by the men of ancient Israel we have no means of knowing. Some, doubtless, had a faint perception of it; but at its clearest it was probably more a dissatisfaction with what they had, leading them to look for some better sacrifice, than any more definite understanding. But what they only dimly guessed was, as we can now see, the inner meaning of all; and it is perfectly legitimate to use both the provisional and the perfected revelations to explain each other. On these grounds the New Testament freely makes use of the ancient ritual to bring out the full significance of the sacrifice of Christ.

No doubt a different view has to be reckoned with. Many say that the whole of this typical reference is a begging of the question. In the infancy of mankind sacrifice was a natural way of expressing adoration and of seeking the favour of the gods. In the heathen world it reached its highest manifestation in those piacular sacrifices of which Robertson Smith speaks, but which nevertheless were merely an outgrowth of Totemism. In Israel sacrifice was taken up by the religion of Yahweh and embodied in it. The spiritual forces which were at work in that nation used it as a means whereby to express themselves; and when Christ came to complete the revelation, His purely ethical and spiritual work was unavoid-

ably expressed in sacrificial terms. But that is no guarantee that the essential thing in the work of Christ was sacrifice. On the contrary, the sacrificial language used about it is of no real importance. It is simply the natural and unavoidable form of expression, in that place and at that time, for any spiritual deliverance. In short, had there been really nothing sacrificial in the death of Christ, the religious meaning and significance of it would have been expressed in sacrificial language, for no other was available. Consequently the presence of such language in the New Testament does not prove that the sacrificial meaning belongs to its main and permanent significance. The sacrificial idea, on this view of things, belongs, both in Israel and in heathenism, to the elements which Christianity superseded and did away with; and it is consequently an anachronism to bring it in to explain and elucidate anything done or taught under this new dispensation.

But such a view is singularly narrow, and unjust to the past. It surely is more honouring to both God and man to suppose that the capital religious ideas of the race, those ideas which have been everywhere present and have been seen to deepen and refine with every advance man has made, have permanent value. Moreover, on any view, it is probable that in them the essential religious needs of human nature have found expression. If so, we should expect that they would in the end be met, and that the perfect religion, when it did come, would not ignore but satisfy the demand which the nature of man and the providence of God had originated and combined to strengthen. Further, it is the very essence of the Scriptural view of Christ that He perfected and carried to their highest power all the essential features in the religious constitution of Israel. He *was* indeed the true Israel, and all Israel's tasks fell to Him. As Prophet,

Priest, and Messianic King alike, He excelled all His predecessors, who were what they were only because they had, in their degree, done part of the work which He was to come to finish. Apart from the religion of the Old Testament, therefore, Christ is unintelligible, and that, in turn, without Him, has neither a progress nor a goal. Belief in a Divine direction of the world would in itself be sufficient to forbid the separation of one from the other. If so, it will follow that the sacrificial idea is essential to the interpretation of our Lord's work. That idea grew in complexity with the growth of the higher religion. It was at its deepest when religious thought and feeling had done its most perfect work; and on every principle of evolution we should expect that, instead of disappearing at the next stage, it would, though transformed, be more influential than ever. It is so if Christ's death is regarded from the point of view of sacrifice; whereas, if that is laid aside like a worn-out garment, it can never have been anything anywhere but an excrescence and a superstition. That has not been so; the essential ideas connected with sacrifice, and forgiveness by means of it, were lessons Divinely taught in the childhood of the world, to prepare men to understand the Divinest mystery of history when it should be manifested to the world.

CHAPTER XVI

LAWS AGAINST IDOLATROUS ACTS AND CUSTOMS

DEUT. xiii., xiv.

HAVING thus set forth the law which was to crown and complete the long resistance of faithful Israel to idolatry, our author goes on to prohibit and to decree punishment for any action likely to lead to the worship of false gods. He absolutely forbids any inquiry into the religions of the Canaanites. "Take heed to thyself that thou inquire not after their gods, saying, How do these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise." All that was acceptable to Yahweh was included in the law of Israel, and beyond that they were on no account to go in their worship. "What thing soever I command you, that shall ye observe to do: thou shalt not add thereto nor diminish from it." But it should be observed that the inquiry here forbidden has nothing in common with the scientific inquiries of Comparative Religion in our time. Curiosity of that kind, supported by the motive of discovering how religion had grown, was unknown at that early age of the world, probably everywhere, certainly in Israel. The only curiosity powerful enough to result in action then was that which tried to learn how the ritual might be made more potent in its influence over Yahweh by gathering attractive features from every known religion. That was one of the distinguishing characteristics of Manasseh's reign. The Canaanite religions, the religions of Egypt and Assyria, were all laid under contribution;

and wherever there was a feature which promised additional power with God or the gods, that was eagerly adopted. Israel had lost faith in Yahweh, owing to the successes of Assyria. In unbelieving terror men were wildly grasping at any means of safety. They worshipped Yahweh, lest He should do them harm, but they joined with Him the gods of their foes, to secure if possible their favour also. Inquiry into other religions, with the intent of adopting something from them which would make either Yahweh or the strange gods, or both, propitious to them, was rife. Like the heathen population who had been transported by Assyria into the territory of the ten tribes, men "feared Yahweh, and served their graven images." All that is here sternly condemned, and Judah is taught to look only to the Divine commands for effective means of approach to their God. The prohibition, therefore, does not import mere fanatical opposition to knowledge. It is a necessary practical measure of defence against idolatry; and only those can disapprove of it who are incapable of estimating the value which the true religion in its Old Testament shape had and has for the world. To preserve that was the high and unique calling of Israel. Any narrowness, real or supposed, which this great task imposed upon that people, is amply compensated for by their guardianship of the spiritual life of mankind.

But if inquiry into lower religions was forbidden, there could be nothing but the sternest condemnation for those who had inquired, and then endeavoured to seduce the chosen people. Deuteronomy, therefore, takes three typical cases—first, seduction by one who was respected because of high religious office, then seduction by one who had influence because of close bonds of natural affection, and lastly that of a community which would be likely to have influence by force of numbers—and gives inexorably stern directions how such evil is to be met. There can be little

doubt that the cases are not imaginary. In the evil days which the Deuteronomist had fallen upon they were probably of frequent occurrence, and they are, consequently, provided against as real and present evils. Naturally the writer takes the most difficult case first. If an Israelite prophet, with all his religious prestige as a confidant of Yahweh, and still more with the prestige of successful prediction in his favour, shall attempt to lead men to join other gods to Yahweh in their worship—for that and not rejection of Yahweh for the exclusive service of strange gods is almost certainly meant—then they were not to listen to him. They were to fall back upon the original principle of the Mosaic teaching as it was restated in Deuteronomy, that Yahweh alone was to be their God. Some lynx-eyed critics have discovered here the cloven hoof of legalism. They think they see here the free spirit of prophecy, to which untrammelled initiative was the very breath of life, subjected to the bondage of written law, and so doomed to death. But probably such a mood is unnecessarily elegiac. It is not to written law that prophecy is subjected here. It is the actual life-principle of Yahwism in its simplest form which prophecy is required to respect; that is, ultimately, it is called upon simply to respect itself. Its own existence depended upon faithfulness to Yahweh. If it had a mission at all, it was to proclaim Him and to declare His character. If it had a distinction which severed it from mere heathen soothsaying, it was that it had been raised by the inspiration of Yahweh into the region of "the true, the good, the eternal," and its whole power lay in its keeping open the communication with that region. It is therefore only the law of its own inner being to which prophecy is here bound; and the people are instructed that, whatever reputation or even supernatural power it might have attained to, it was to be obeyed only when true to itself

and to the faith. Nothing was to make men stagger from that foundation. Not even the working of miracles was to mislead the people, for only on the plane of Yahweh's revelation had even miracle any worth. This is the sound and wholesome doctrine of true prophecy, and other utterances on the subject in our book must be taken in conjunction with it. Religious faithfulness, not foretelling, is the essence of it, and by that the prophet is to be inexorably judged. If any prophet, therefore, leads men to strange gods, his character and his powers only make him more dangerous and his punishment more inexorable. "That prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death." He comes under the ban. "So shalt thou put away the evil from the midst of thee."

Similarly, when family ties and family affection are perverted to be instruments of seduction, they are to be disregarded, just as religious reputation and miraculous power were to be set aside. If a brother, or a son, or a daughter, or a wife, or a friend, shall secretly entice a man to "serve other gods," then he shall not only not yield, but he must slay the tempter. It is characteristic of the Deuteronomist that, by the qualifications of the various relationships he mentions, he should show his sympathy and his insight into the depths of both family affection and friendship. "Thy brother, the son of thy mother," "the wife of thy bosom," "the friend which is as thine own soul," even these, near as they are to thee, must be sacrificed if they are false to Israel and to Israel's God. Nay more, "Thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people, and thou shalt stone him with stones that he die." Upon him, too, the ban shall be laid.

Nor, finally, shall their multitude shield those who suffered themselves to be perverted. If a city should

have been led away by sons of Belial, *i.e.* by worthless men, to worship strange gods, then the whole city was to be put to the ban. It was to be immediately stormed, every living creature put to death, and all the spoil of it burnt "unto Yahweh their God"; and the ruins were to be a "mound for ever"—that is, a place accursed. Only on these terms could Yahweh be turned away from the fierceness of His anger at such treason and unfaithfulness among His people. The Canaanites had been condemned to death that their idolatries and vices might not corrupt the spiritual faith of Israel. There was no other way, if the treasure which had been committed to this nation was to be preserved. As Robertson Smith has said, "Experience shows that primitive religious beliefs are practically indestructible except by the destruction of the race in which they are engrained." But if so, it was perhaps even more necessary that idolaters within Israel should be also extirpated. We may think the punishment harsh; and our modern doctrines concerning toleration can by no ingenuity be brought into harmony with it. But the times were fierce, and men were not easily restrained. In more civilised communities excessive severity in punishment defeats itself, for it enlists sympathy on the side of the criminal. But among a people like the Hebrews, probably severity succeeded where mercy would have been flouted. In India our administrators have had to confess that the horrible recklessness and severity of punishment in the Mahratta states of the old type suppressed crime as the infinitely more just and better organised but milder British police organisations could not then do. "Probably the success of barbarous methods of repressing crime is best explained by their origin in and close connection with a primitive state of society. Because punishments were inhuman, they struck terror where no other motive would

deter from crime."[1] In other and Scriptural words, the hardness of men's hearts made such harshness unavoidable.

Taking the whole of this thirteenth chapter into consideration, therefore, we see how high and severe were the demands which Old Testament religion, as taught in Deuteronomy, made upon its votaries. It presupposes on the part of the people an insight into the fundamentally spiritual nature of their faith entirely unobscured by ritual and sacrifice. They were expected to pass beyond the teachings of accredited spiritual guides, beyond even the evidence of supernatural power, and to test all by the moral and spiritual truth, once delivered to them by prophet and by miracle, and now a secure possession. Spiritual truth received and lived by is thus set above everything else as the test and the judge of all. Other things were merely ladders by which men had been brought to the truth in religion. Once there, nothing should move them; and any further guidance which purported to come from even the heavenly places was to be tried and accepted, only if it corroborated the fundamental truths already received and attested by experience in actual life. Loyalty to ascertained truth, that is, is greater than loyalty to teachers, or to that which seems to be supernatural; and the chief power for which a prophet is to be reverenced is not that by which he gives a true forecast of the future, but that which impels him to speak the truth about God.

Even at this day, and for believers in Christ, after all the teaching and experience of eighteen Christian centuries, this is a high, almost an unattainable, standard to set up. Even to-day it is thought an advanced position that miracles as a security for truth are subordinate and inferior to the light of the truth itself as exhibited in the

[1] Tupper *Our Indian Protectorate*, p. 248.

lives of faithful men. Yet that is precisely what the Deuteronomist teaches. He has no doubt about miracles. He regards them as being Divinely sent, even when they might be made use of to mislead; but he calls upon his people to disregard them if they seem to point towards unfaithfulness to God. Their supreme trust is to be that Yahweh cannot deny Himself. If he seem to do so by giving the sanction of miracle to teaching which denies Him, that is only to prove men, to know whether they love Yahweh their God with all their heart and with all their soul. The inner certainty of those who have had communion with Yahweh is to override everything else. "Whosoever loves God with a pure heart," says Calvin, "is armed with the invincible power of the Divine Spirit, that he should not be ensnared by falsehoods."[1] This has always been the confidence of religious reformers who have had real power. Luther, for example, took his stand upon the New Testament and his own personal experience; and by what he *knew* of God he judged all that the most venerable tradition, and the authority of the Church, and the examples of saintly men claimed to set forth as binding upon him. "Here stand I: I can do no other: God help me." He felt that he had hold of the heart of the revelation of God as it was made in Christ, and he rejected, without scruple, whatever in itself or in its results contradicted or obscured that. Inspired and upheld by this consciousness, he faced a hostile world and a raging Church with equanimity. It is always so that abuses have been removed and innovations that are hurtful warded off in the Church of God.

But there is a difficulty here. As against the historical examples which show how much good may be wrought by this unshaken mind when accompanied by adequate

[1] *Commentary on Pentateuch*, vol. i., p. 448.

insight, many, perhaps even more, instances can be adduced where unbending assertion of individual conviction has led to fanaticism and irreligion; or, as has even more frequently been the case, has blinded men's eyes, and made them resist with immovable obstinacy teachings on which the future of religion depended. On the altar of uncompromising fidelity to the letter of the faith delivered to them, men in all ages have offered up love and gentleness and fairness, and that open mind to which alone God can speak. How then can they be sure, when they disregard their teachers and defy even signs from heaven, that they are really only holding up the banner of faith in an evil day, and are not hardening themselves against God? The answer is that, since the matter concerns the spiritual life, there are no clear, mechanical dividing lines which can be pointed out and respected. Nothing but spiritual insight can teach a man what the absolutely essential and the less essential elements of religion are. Nothing else can give him that power of distinguishing great things from small which here is of such cardinal importance. Probably the nearest approach to effective guidance may be found in this principle, that when all points in a man's faith are to him equally important, when he frets as much in regard to divergence from his own religious practices as in regard to denial of the faith altogether, he must certainly be wrong. Such a temper must necessarily resist all change; and since progress is as much a law in the religious life as in any other, it must be found at times fighting against God. Otherwise, stagnation would be the test of truth, and the principles of the Christian faith would be branded as so shallow and so easily exhausted, that their whole significance could be seized and set forth at once by the generation which heard the apostles. That was far from being the case. The post-apostolic Church, for instance, did not understand St. Paul. It

turned rather to the simpler ideas of the mass of Christians, and elaborated its doctrines almost entirely on that basis. During the centuries since then many lessons of unspeakable value have been learned by the Christian world. The Church has been enriched by the thoughts and teachings of multitudes of men of genius. The providential chances and changes of all these centuries have immensely widened and deepened Christian experience. Stagnation consequently cannot be made the test of Christian truth. We must be open to new light on the meaning of Divine revelation, or we fail altogether, as the Israelites would have done had they refused to accept the teaching of any prophet after the first. This much may, however, be said on the affirmative side, that when a man has thoughtfully and prayerfully decided that the central element of his faith is attacked, he cannot but resist, and if he is faithful he will resist in the spirit of the passage we are discussing. His assertion of his individual conviction, even if it be mistaken, will do little harm. Time will be in favour of the truth. But mistake will be rare, indeed, when men are taught to assert in this manner only the things by which the soul lives, when only the actual channels of communion with God are thus defended to the uttermost. These any thoughtful patient man who looks for and yields to the guidance of the Holy Spirit of Christ will almost infallibly recognise, and by these he will take his stand, for he can do no other.

But precautions against idolatry are not exhausted by the war declared upon men who might attempt to lead the Israelite into evil. Besides insidious human enemies, there were also insidious customs originating in heathenism, and still redolent of idolatry even when they were severed from any overt connection with it. Ancient rituals, ancient superstitions, hateful remnants of bloodthirsty

pagan rites, were being revived in the Deuteronomist's day on every hand, because faith in the higher religion that had superseded them had been shaken. Like streams from hidden reservoirs suddenly reopened, idolatrous and magical practices were overflowing the land, and were finding in popular customs, harmless in better days, channels for their return into the life of those who had formerly risen above them.

Some of these were more hurtful than others, and two are singled out at the beginning of chapter xiv. as those which a people holy unto Yahweh must specially avoid: "Ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead." The grounds for avoiding these practices are first given, and we may probably assume that they are the grounds also for the other enactments which follow. They are these: "Ye are the children of Yahweh your God," and "Thou art a holy people unto Yahweh thy God, and Yahweh hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto Himself, out of all peoples that are upon the face of the earth." The last of these reasons is common to the Exodus code with Deuteronomy, and comes even more prominently into view in the Levitical law. Just as Yahweh alone was to be their God, they alone were to be Yahweh's people, and they were to be holy to Him, *i.e.* were to separate themselves to Him; for in its earliest meaning to be holy is simply to be separate to Yahweh. This whole dispensation of law, that is, was meant to separate the people of Israel from the idolatrous world, and in this separation we have the key to much that would otherwise be hard to comprehend. Looked at from the point of view of revelation, petty details about tonsure, about clean and unclean animals, and so on, seem incredibly unworthy; and many have said to themselves, How can the God of the whole earth have really been the author of laws

dealing with such trivialities? But when we regard these as provisions intended to secure the separation of the chosen people, they assume quite another aspect. Then we see that they had to be framed in contrast to the idolatries of the surrounding nations, and are not meant to have further spiritual or moral significance.

But the first reason given is a higher and more important one, which occurs here for the first time in Deuteronomy: "Ye are the children of Yahweh your God." In heathen lands such a title of honour was common, because physically most worshippers of false gods were regarded as their children. But in Israel, where such physical sonship would have been rejected with horror as impairing the Divine holiness, the spiritual sonship was asserted of the individual much more slowly. In Yahweh's command to Moses to threaten Pharaoh with the death of his firstborn son, and in Hosea xi. 1, Israel collectively is called Yahweh's firstborn and His son. In Hosea i. 10 it is prophesied that in the Messianic time, "in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not My people, it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God." But here for the first time this high title is bestowed upon the actual individual Israelites. It was perhaps implied in the Deuteronomist's view of God's fatherly treatment of the nation in the desert, and still more in his demand for the love of the individual heart. Yet only here is it brought plainly forth as a ground for the regulation of life according to Yahweh's commands. Each son of Israel is also a son of God; and by none of his acts or habits should he bring disgrace upon his spiritual Father. Likeness to God is expected and demanded of him. It is his function in the world to represent Him, to give expression to the Divine character in all his ways. This is the Israelite's high calling, and the religious application of *noblesse oblige* to such matters

as follow, gives a dignity and importance to all of them such as in their own nature they could hardly claim.

"Ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead." Israel was not to express grief for the dead in these ways, first because that was the custom of other nations, and secondly still more because the origin and meaning of such rites was idolatrous, and as such altogether unworthy of Yahweh's sons. "Both," says Robertson Smith, "occur not only in mourning, but in the worship of the gods, and belong to the sphere of heathen superstition."[1] Elsewhere he explains the cutting of themselves to be the making of a blood covenant with the dead, just as the priests of Baal in their worship tried to get their god to come to their help by making a covenant of blood with him at his altar.[2] This naturally tended to bring in the superstitions of necromancy, and opened the way also for the worship of the dead. Many traces of its previous existence among the Israelite tribes are to be found in the Scriptures; and the probability is that as ancestor-worship ruled the life and shaped the thoughts of Greeks and Romans till Christianity appeared, so Yahwism alone had broken its power over Israel. But such superstitions die hard, and in the general recrudescence of almost forgotten forms of heathenism at this time, this cult may very well have been reasserting itself. As for the shaving of the front part of the head, that had a precisely similar import. "It had exactly the same sense as the offering of the mourner's blood."[3] "When the hair of the living is deposited with the dead, and the hair of the dead remains with the living, a permanent bond of connection unites the two."

The prohibition as food of the animals and birds called

[1] *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, p. 366.
[2] *Religion of the Semites*, p. 304.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 306.

"unclean" was another measure obviously of the same nature as the prohibition of heathen mourning practices; but in its details it is more difficult to explain. Probably, however, it was a more potent instrument of separation than any other. In India to-day the gulf between the flesh-eater and the orthodox vegetarian Hindu is utterly impassable; and in the east of Europe and in Palestine, where the Jewish restrictions as to food are still regarded, the orthodox Jew is separated from all Gentiles as by a wall. In travelling he never appears at meals with his fellow-travellers. All the food he requires he carries with him in a basket; and at every place where he stops it is the duty of the Jewish community to supply him with proper food, that he may not be tempted to defile himself with anything unclean. But it is very difficult for us now to bring the individual prohibitions under one head, and it seems impossible to explain them from any one point of view.

Some of the animals and birds prohibited were probably, then, animals eaten in connection with idolatrous feasts by the neighbouring heathen. Isa. lxv. 4 shows that swine's flesh was eaten at sacrificial meals by idolaters, and from the expression "broth of abominable things is in their vessels" it is clear that the flesh of other animals was so used. All these would necessarily be prohibited to Israel; but beyond a few, such as the swine, which was sacrificed to Tammuz or Adonis, and the mouse and the wild ass, we have no means of knowing what they were. That this is a *vera causa* of such prohibitions is shown by the facts mentioned by Professor Robertson Smith, that "Simeon Stylites forbade his Saracen converts to eat the flesh of the camel, which was the chief element in the sacrificial meals of the Arabs, and our own prejudice against the use of horse-flesh is a relic of an old ecclesiastical prohibition framed at the

time when the eating of such food was an act of worship to Odin." The very ancient and stringent prohibition of blood as an article of diet is probably to be accounted for in this way also. Blood was eaten at heathen sacrificial feasts; without other reason that would be sufficient. These are the general lines which must have determined the list of clean animals in the view of the lawgiver, since he brings them in under the head of idolatry and under the two general grounds we have discussed (p. 289, *supra*).

Jewish writers, however, especially since Maimonides, have regarded these prohibitions as aiming primarily at sanitary ends, and as a proof of their efficacy have adduced the unusually high average health of the Jews, and their almost complete exemption from certain classes of disease. No such point of view is suggested in the Scriptures themselves, for it would surely be rather farfetched to class possible disease as an infringement of the holiness demanded of Israel, or as a thing unworthy of Yahweh's sons. Nevertheless a general view of the list of clean animals here given would support the idea that sanitary considerations also had *something* to do with the classification. The practical effect of the rule laid down is to exclude all the *carnivora* among quadrupeds, and so far as we can interpret the nomenclature, the *raptores* among birds.[1] "Amongst fish, those which were allowed contain unquestionably the most wholesome varieties." Further, the nations of antiquity which developed such categories of clean and unclean animals seem in the main to have taken the same line. The ground of this probably is the natural disgust with which unclean feeders are always regarded. Animals and birds especially which feed, or may be supposed to feed, on carrion, are everywhere

[1] Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. iii. p. 1589.

disliked, and as a rule they are unsuitable for food. Grass-eating animals, on the other hand, are always regarded as clean. Scaleless fish, too, are generally more or less slimy to the touch, and with them reptiles are altogether forbidden. All this seems to show that a natural sentiment of disgust, for whatever reason felt, was active in the selection of the animals marked unclean by men of every race. The pre-Mosaic customary law on this subject would, of course, have this characteristic in common with similar laws of primitive nations. When the worship of Yahweh was introduced, most of this would be taken over, only such modifications being introduced as the higher religion demanded. In some main elements, therefore, the Mosaic law on this subject would be a repetition of what is to be found elsewhere. Hence a general tendency to health may be expected; for besides the guidance which healthy disgust would give, a long experience must also have been registered in such laws. The influence of them in promoting health has recently been acknowledged by the *Lancet*; and though that reason for observing them is not mentioned in Scripture, we may view it as a proof that the Jewish legislators were under an influence which brought them, perhaps even when they knew it not, into relation with what was wholesome in the practices and customs of their place and time.

Beyond these three reasons for the laws regarding food, all is the wildest speculation. If other reasons underlie these laws, we cannot now ascertain what they were. For a time it was the custom to ascribe the Jewish laws to Persian influence, though from the nature of the case such laws must have been part of the heritage of Israel from pre-Mosaic time. Even to-day Jewish writers ascribe them to the evil effect which bad food has upon the soul, either by infecting it with the characteristics of the unclean beasts, or by rendering it impenetrable to

good influences.[1] But, as usual, it is the allegorical interpreters who carry off the palm. Animals that chew the cud were to be eaten, because they symbolised those who "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest" the Divine law: those which divide the hoof are examples of those who distinguish between good and bad actions; and in the ostrich one interpreter finds an analogue to the bad commentators who pervert the words of Holy Scripture.

Hitherto in chapter xiv. we have been dealing with material to which a parallel can be found only in the small code of laws contained in Lev. xvii.—xxvi., commonly called the Law of Holiness, and in the Priestly Code.[2] But the two remaining directions regarding food, which are contained in the twenty-first verse are parallel to prohibitions in the Law of the Covenant. The first, "Ye shall not eat of anything that dieth of itself . . . for thou art an holy people unto Yahweh thy God," is parallel to Exod. xxii. 31. "And ye shall be holy men unto Me: therefore ye shall not eat any flesh that is torn of beasts in the field," and to Lev. xvii. 15, "Every soul that eateth that which dieth of itself, or that which is torn of beasts, whether he be homeborn or a stranger, he shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening." The ground for prohibiting such food, was, of course, that the blood was in it. But there is a divergence between the parallel laws, which is seen clearly when we take into account the destination of the flesh of the animal so dying. In Exodus it is said, "To the dogs shall ye cast it." In Deuteronomy the command is, "To the stranger within thy gates ye shall give it, and he shall eat of it, or ye may sell it unto a foreigner." In Leviticus

[1] Dillmann, *Deuteronomy*, p. 483.

[2] This, of course, does not show that P must have been known to D, but it proves that as regards material P and D have drawn from the same source, and that older documents, or customs at least, underlie both

it is taken for granted that an Israelite and also a stranger may eat either of the *nebhelah*, that which dieth of itself, or the *terephah*, that which is torn; and if either do so it is prescribed only that he should wash, and should be unclean until the evening.

Here, therefore, we have one of the cases in which the traditional hypothesis—that the Law of the Covenant was given at Sinai when Israel arrived there, the laws of the Priestly Code probably not many weeks after, and the code of Deuteronomy only thirty-eight or thirty-nine years later, but before the laws had come fully into effect by the occupation of Canaan—raises a difficulty. Why should the Sinaitic law say that *terephah* is not to be eaten by any one, but cast to the dogs, and the Levitical law in so short a time after make the eating of that and *nebhelah* mere cause of subordinate uncleanness to both Israelite and stranger, while Deuteronomy permits the Israelite either to give the *nebhelah* to the stranger that he may eat it, or to make it an article of traffic with the foreigner? Keil's explanation is certainly feasible, that in Exodus we have the law, in Leviticus the provision for accidental, or perhaps wilful, disobedience of it under the pressure of hunger, while in Deuteronomy we have a permission to sell, lest on the plea of waste the law might be ignored. But the position of the "*gēr*," or stranger, is not accounted for. In Leviticus he is bound to the worship of Yahweh, and can no more eat *nebhelah* or *terephah* than the native Israelite can, while in Deuteronomy he is on a lower stage than the Israelite as regards ceremonial cleanness, and much on the same level as the *nokhri*, the foreigner, who in Deuteronomy is dealt with as an inferior, not bound to the same scrupulosity as the Israelite (Deut. xv. 3, 23, 29). There does not appear to be any explanation of such a change in less than forty years; more especially as the moment at which the change would

on that hypothesis be made was precisely the moment when the stranger was about for the first time to become an important element in Israelite life. If, on the other hand, the order of the codes be Exodus, Deuteronomy, Leviticus, then the Exodus law, which does not consider the stranger, would suit the earliest stage of Israel's history, when the stranger would generally be a spy. Later, he crept into Israelite life, and gradually received more and more consideration; especially in the days of Solomon, when the Chronicler estimates the number of the strangers at over a hundred and fifty thousand. But he was not recognised at that stage as fully bound to all an Israelite's duties, or as possessed of all an Israelite's privileges, and that is precisely the position he occupies in Deuteronomy. In the Priestly Code, however, at a time when the stranger had practically become a proselyte, the ideal Kingdom of God includes the "stranger," and gives him a position which differs little from that of the homeborn. That would make these different laws answer to different periods of Israel's history, and would coincide with what has been otherwise found to be the order of Israel's legal development.

The second prohibition, which runs parallel to what we find in Exodus, is the somewhat enigmatical one that a kid should not be sodden in its mother's milk. What it was in this act which made it seem necessary to issue such a command cannot now be ascertained with any certainty. Most probably it was connected in some way with heathen ceremonies, perhaps at a harvest feast; for, as we have seen, it is a ruling motive throughout all this section that the Israelites should reject everything which among their neighbours was connected with idolatry.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SPEAKERS FOR GOD—I. THE KING

DEUT. xvii. 14-20

IN approaching the main section of the legislation it will be necessary, in accordance with the expository character of the series to which this volume belongs, to abandon the consecutive character of the comment. It would lead us too far into archæology to discuss the meaning and origin of all the legal provisions which follow. Moreover nothing short of an extensive commentary would do them justice, and for our purpose we must endeavour to group the prescriptions of the code, and discuss them so. As it stands there is no arrangement traceable. So utterly without order is it, that it can hardly be thought that it is in the exact shape in which it left its author's hands. Transpositions and misplacements must, one thinks, have taken place to some extent. We are thus left free to make our own arrangements, and it would appear most fitting to discuss the code under the five heads of National Life, Economic Life, and three fundamental qualities of a healthy national life—Purity, Justice, and the Treatment of the Poor. Every phase of the laws which remain for discussion can easily be brought under these heads, and this chapter will discuss the first of them, the organisation of the national life.

It is a striking instance of the accuracy of the national memory that there is a clear and conscious testimony to the fact that for long there was no king in Israel. Had

the later historians been at the mercy of a tradition so deeply influenced by later times as it pleases some critics to suppose, it would seem inexplicable that Moses should not have been represented as a king, and especially that the conquest should not have been represented as a king's work. Evidently there was a perfectly clear national consciousness of the earlier circumstances of the nation, and it presents us with an outline of the original constitution which is very simple and credible. According to this the tribes whom Moses led were ruled in the main by their own sheikhs or elders. Under these again were the clans or fathers' houses similarly governed; and lastly, there were the families in the wider sense, made up of the individual households and governed by their heads. So far as can be gathered, Moses did not interfere with this fundamental organisation at all. He added to it only his own supremacy, as the mediator and means of communication between Yahweh and His people. As such, his decision was final in all matters too difficult for the sheikhs and judges. But the fundamental point never lost sight of was that Yahweh alone was their ruler, their legislator, their leader in war, and the doer of justice among His people. From the very first moment of Israel's national existence therefore, from the moment that it passed the Red Sea, Yahweh was acknowledged as King, and Moses was simply His representative. That is the cardinal fact in this nation's life, and amid all the difficulties and changes of its later history that was always held to. Even when kings were appointed, they were regarded only as the viceroys of Yahweh. In this way the whole of the national affairs received a religious colour; and those who look at them from a religious standpoint have a justification which would have been less manifest under other circumstances.

It is, therefore, no delusion of later times which finds

in Israelite institutions a deep religious meaning. Nor is the persistence with which the Scriptural historians regard only the religious aspects of national life to be laid as a fault to their charge. It is nothing to the purpose to say that the bulk of the people had no thoughts of that kind, that the whole fabric of the national institutions appeared to them in a different light. We have no right to lower the meaning of things to the gross materialism of the populace. One would almost think, to hear some Old Testament critics speak, that in this most ideal realm of religion we can be safe from illusion only when ideal points of view are abandoned, that only in the commonest light of common day have we any security that we are not deceiving ourselves. But most of these same men would resent it bitterly if that standard were applied to the history of the lands they themselves love. What Englishman would think that Great Britain's career and destiny were rightly estimated if imperial sentiment and humanitarian aims were thrust aside in favour of purely material considerations? Why then should it be supposed that the views and opinions of the multitude are the only safe criterion to be applied to the institutions of God's ancient people?

In truth, there is no reason why we should think so. The Divine kingship made it impossible that the higher minds should be content with the low aims of the opportunists of their day, whether these were of the multitude or not. Even the entrance into Canaan, which to the mass of the people was, in the first place, a mere acquisition of territory and wealth, was idealised for the leaders of the people by the thought that it was the land promised by Yahweh to their fathers, the land in which they should live in communion with Him. Generally, it may be said that the desire for communion with God was the impelling and formative power in Israel. The thoughts

of even the dullest and most earthly were touched by that ideal at times; and no leader, whether royal, or priestly, or prophetic, ever really succeeded among this people who did not keep that persistently in view as the true goal of his efforts. Moreover this gave its depth of meaning to the whole movement of history in Israel. Every triumph and defeat, every lapse and every reform had, owing to this direction of the people's efforts, a significance far beyond itself. These were not merely incidents in the history of an obscure people; they were the pulsations and movements of the world's advance to the full revelation of God. All that would have been wholly national or tribal in the institutions and arrangements of an ordinary people was in Israel lifted up into the religious sphere; and the orders of men who spoke for the invisible King—the earthly king, the priest, and the prophet—became naturally the organs of the national life.

The king's position was entirely dependent upon Yahweh. He was to be chosen by Yahweh, he was to act for Yahweh, and no king could rightly fill his place in Israel who was not loyal to that conception. It is in this sense that David was the man after God's own heart. He, in contrast to Saul and to many of the later kings, accepted with entire loyalty, notwithstanding his great natural powers, the position of viceroy for Yahweh. It is, therefore, an essential truth which underlies the Scriptural judgment that the kings who made themselves, or attempted to make themselves, independent of Yahweh, were false to Israel and to their true calling. And this is why Samuel, when the people demanded a king, regarded the movement with stern disapproval, and why he received an oracle denouncing the movement as a falling away from Yahweh. For, in the first place, the motive for the people's request, their desire to be like

other nations, was in itself a rejection of their God. It repudiated, in part at least, the position of Israel as His peculiar people, and implied that an earthly king would do more for them than Yahweh had done; whereas if they had been faithful and united enough in spirit they would have found victory easy. In the second, the request in itself was a confession of unfitness for their high national calling; it was a confession of failure under the conditions which had been Divinely appointed for them. Not only in the eyes of the Biblical historian therefore, but as a plain matter of fact, the demand was an expression of dissatisfaction on the people's part with their invisible King. They needed something less spiritual than Yahweh's invisible presence and the prophetic word to guide them. But since they had declared themselves thus unfaithful, Yahweh had to deal with them at that level, and granted their request as a concession to their unbelief and hardness of heart.

That is the representation of the Books of Samuel; and the absence of any similar law from the codes before Deuteronomy confirms the view that the earthly kingship was not an essential part of the polity of Israel, but a mere episode. Nowhere in legislation save here in Deuteronomy is the king ever mentioned, and nowhere, not even here, is any provision made for his maintenance. No civil taxes are appointed by any law, while the most ample provision is made for the presentation direct to Yahweh, as Lord paramount, of tithes and firstfruits.

The history and the law alike agree therefore in regarding the kingship as somewhat of an excrescence upon the national polity; and this law, where alone the king's existence is recognised, confines itself strictly to securing the theocratic character of the constitution. He must be chosen by Yahweh; he must be a born worshipper of Yahweh, not a foreigner; and he must rule in accordance

with the law given by Yahweh. Further, the ideal Israelite king must be on his guard against the grossly voluptuous luxury which Oriental sovereigns have never been able to resist, either in ancient or modern times; and also against the lust for war and conquest which was the ruling passion of Assyrian and Egyptian kings. Evidently too the ideal king of Israel was, like Bedouin sheikhs now, expected to be rich, able to maintain his state out of his own revenues. The tribute paid by subject peoples, together with the booty taken in war and the profits of trade, were his only legitimate sources of income beyond his own wealth. Every other exaction was more or less of an oppression. He had no right to make any claims upon the land, for that was held direct of Yahweh. Nor were there any regular taxes, so far as the Old Testament informs us. The only approach to that would appear to be that the presents with which his subjects voluntarily approached the king were sometimes and by some rulers made permanent demands; at least that would seem to be the meaning of the somewhat obscure statement in 1 Sam. xvii. 25 that King Saul would reward the slayer of Goliath by making "his father's house free in Israel." Some kind of regular exaction from which the victorious champion's family should be free must here be referred to; but it would not be safe, in the absence of all other evidence, to suppose that regular taxes in the modern sense are referred to. More probably something of the nature of the "benevolences" which Edward IV. introduced into England as a source of revenue is meant. If a popular and powerful king of Israel was in want of money, he could always secure it by ordering those able to afford handsome presents to appear yearly before him with such gifts as a loyal subject should offer. For the convenience of all parties an indication of how much would be expected might be made, and then he would

have what to all intents and purposes would be a tax. Along with this he might also enforce the *corvée*; but such things were always regarded as excesses of despotic power. That Samuel in his *mishpat hammelekh* (1 Sam. viii. 15) warns the people that the king would demand of them a tithe of their cereal crops and of the fruit of their vineyards and of their sheep, does not contradict this reading of the passage in 1 Sam. xvii. For though chapter viii. belongs to the later portion of 1 Samuel and may therefore represent what the kings had actually claimed, yet it in no way endorses such demands. On the contrary, it indicates that such exactions would bring the people into slavery to the king by the phrase "And ye shall be to him for slaves." All that is mentioned there, consequently, is part of the evil the kingship would bring with it, and cannot in any way be regarded as a legal provision for the maintenance of royalty.

It is not probable, therefore, that in these prescriptions the author of Deuteronomy is repeating a more ancient law. No such law has come down to us. Dillmann supposes the provision that the king should always be an Israelite to be ancient; and indeed at first sight it is difficult to see why such a provision should be introduced for the first time in the last days of the Southern Kingdom, where the kingship had so long been confined, not only to Israelites, but to the Davidic line. But Jer. xxxii. 21—"Their potentate shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them"—shows that, whatever the cause might be, there was in the first years of the sixth century a longing for a native king similar to that here expressed. In any case, as the obvious intention here is to make entire submission to Yahweh the condition of any legitimate kingship, it was only consistent to require expressly that the king should be one of Yahweh's people. That motive

would be quite sufficient to account for raising what had been the invariable practice into a formulated law; and no other of the prescriptions need have been ancient. On the other hand, the curious phrase "Only he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to the end that he should multiply horses; forasmuch as Yahweh hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way," can hardly belong to the Mosaic time. There was no doubt then much danger that the people should wish to return to Egypt; but that a king should cause them to return for horses, is too much of a subordinate detail to have been portion of a Mosaic prophecy. If, as is most probable, the phrase condemns the sending of Israelites into Egypt to buy horses and chariots, it can have been written only after Solomon's days. Before that time Israel, as an almost exclusively mountain people, regarded horses and chariots with dislike, and usually destroyed them when they fell into their hands. With the extension of their power over the plains and the growth of a lust for conquest, they sought after chariots eagerly. To procure them they entered into alliances with Egypt which the prophets denounced, and which brought to the nation nothing but evil. It was natural, therefore, that the Deuteronomist should specially mention this detail, and should support it by reference to a Divine promise, which does not appear in our Bible, but which probably was found in either the Yahwistic or the Elohistic narrative.

But whether the whole is Deuteronomic or not, there can be no question that the command that the king shall have "a copy of this law" prepared for him and shall read constantly therein is so; and perhaps of all the prescriptions this is the most important. In purely Eastern states there is no legislature at all, and the greater part of the criminal jurisdiction especially is carried on

without any reference to fixed law save in cases affecting religion. This was the case in the Mahratta states in India so long as they were independent. The ruler and the officers he appointed administered justice, solely according to custom and their own notions of rectitude, "without advertence to any law except the popular notions of customary law."[1] Now in Israel the state of things was entirely similar, save in so far as the fundamental principles of Yahwistic religion had been formulated. In all other respects customary law ruled everything. But it was the religious influence that gave its highest and best developments to the life of Israel. It was this, too, which brought to such early maturity in Israel the principles of justice, mercy, and freedom. Elsewhere these were of exceedingly slow growth. In Israel, the influence of the lofty religious ideas implanted in the nation by Moses did for them what the influence of the higher political and social ideas of the governing Englishmen are said to do, under favourable circumstances, for the Indian peoples. Without disturbing the general harmony which must subsist between all parts of the organism of the State if the nation's life is to be healthy, and without putting it out of relation with its surroundings, that influence has been, and is still, moving the more backward Indian societies along the natural paths of human progress at a greatly accelerated speed.[2] In a similar way the Israelite people was moved by the Mosaic influence, in its aspirations at least, with an elsewhere unexampled speed and certainty, towards an ideal of national life which no nation since has even endeavoured to realise. But whenever the kings threw off the yoke of Yahweh and plunged into idolatry, then the evils of despotic Oriental rule made their appearance unchecked. These evils have been enumerated in the

[1] Tupper, *Our Indian Protectorate*, pp. 248, 249. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 321.

following words by one well acquainted with Oriental states: "Cruelty, superstition, callous indifference to the security of the weaker and poorer classes, avarice, corruption, disorder in all public affairs, and open brigandage." With the exception perhaps of the last, these are precisely the sins which the prophets are continually denouncing. Long before Hezekiah they were rampant, especially in the Northern Kingdom, and in the evil days between Hezekiah and Josiah, when we suppose Deuteronomy to have been written, they were indulged in without shame or compunction.

The result was that an inarticulate cry, like that we hear to-day from Persia in the articulate form of newspaper articles, must have filled the hearts of all righteous men and the multitude of the oppressed. What it would be we may learn from the following extract from a letter written from Persia to the *Kamin, i.e.* "Law," a Persian newspaper published in London, and translated by Arminius Vambéry in the *Deutsche Rundschau* for October 1893: "Oh, brothers, behold how deeply we have sunk into the sea of ignominy and shame. Tyranny, famine, disease, poverty, calamity, decay of character, and all the misery in the world has overflowed our country. The cause of all this misfortune lies in this, that we have no laws; only in this, that our conscienceless and foolish great ones have wilfully and purposely rejected, trodden under foot, and destroyed the laws of the sacred code, . . . We are men, and would have laws! It is not new laws we ask for, but we desire that our secular and spiritual heads should assemble and press for the enforcement of the holy laws of the sacred code. Therefore we ask of you this one thing, that you should proclaim: 'We are men, and would have laws.'" The East is so perennially the same, that the two thousand five hundred years which separate that pathetic cry from the prayers of the

true Israel in Manasseh's and Amon's days make no radical difference. The situation was the same, and the need was the same. Hence came this prophetic and priestly redaction of the Law of the Covenant. "They were men, and would have laws." They sought to be freed from the greed, the cruelty, and the lawlessness of their rulers; and having produced their revised code, they wished to secure that it should not disappear from memory, as the more ancient law had been suffered to do. It must be kept continually before the king's mind. "It shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear Yahweh his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes to do them." In this way it was thought that future "great ones" would be prevented from "rejecting, treading under foot, and destroying the laws of the sacred code."

But the king of Israel was not only to be a law-abiding and a law-enforcing king. He was to learn from this new law even a deeper lesson. He was to read daily in the law, "that his heart might not be lifted up above his brethren." Oriental despots either openly claim that they are of higher and purer blood than their subjects, or they deal with these latter as if they had nothing in common with them. In the laws of Manu it is said, "Even an infant king must not be despised, (from an idea) that he is a (mere) mortal; for he is a great deity in human form." It was not to be so in Israel. His subjects were the Israelite king's "brethren." They all stood in the same relation to their God. All equally had shared Yahweh's favour in being delivered from the bondage of Egypt. Each had the same rights, the same privileges, the same claims to justice and consideration as the king himself had. That, this law was to teach the king; and when he had learned the lesson, it is taken for granted that the root from which the other evils spring would be destroyed.

Such, then, the ruler of Israel was to be. He was to feel, first of all his responsibility to God. Then he was to deny himself to the lust of conquest, to the voluptuous pleasures of the flesh, to the most devouring lust of all, the love of money. Last of all, and above all, he was to acknowledge his equality with the poorest of the people in the sight of God. Could there be even yet a nobler ideal set before the kings of the world than this? The reign of only one king of Israel, Josiah, promised its realisation. That seemed, indeed, to be "the fair beginning of a time." But it was not so; it proved to be only an afterglow, a mere prelude to the night. None of his successors made even an attempt to imitate him, and the destruction of the Jewish State put an end to all hope of the appearance of the Yahwistic king in Israel. Elsewhere, before the coming of Christ, he did not appear. Since Christ's coming, here and there, at rare intervals, such rulers have been found. But in the East perhaps the only rulers who can be said to have made any attempt in this direction are the best of the great uncrowned kings of India, the British viceroys.

Such, for example, was Lord Lawrence's aim, and his reward. From the beginning to the end of his Indian career he lived a pure and simple life, laboured with untiring energy for the good of the people, and kept in his mind, as his aspirations for his Punjaub peasantry show, the Old Testament ideal of both ruler and ruled. He was, too, entirely free from the lust of conquest, as some Indian viceroys have not perhaps been; and he did all his work under a solemn sense of responsibility to God. To a large extent, the Biblical ideal made him what he was as a ruler, and the life and power of that ideal now, in such men, sufficiently show the truth of the prophetic and priestly insight which is embodied here. Many who have disregarded these rules have done great

things for the world; but we are only the more sure, after two thousand five hundred years, that on these lines alone can the ruler attain his highest and purest eminence. All the aspirations of men to-day are towards a state of things in which rulers, whether they be any longer kings or no, shall stand on a level of brotherhood with their subjects, and shall set the good of the ruled before them as their sole aim. All men are dreaming now of a future in which personal ambition shall have little scope, in which none will be for himself or for a party, but "all will be for the State." If ever that good dream be realised, rulers of the Deuteronomic type will be universal; and the depth of wisdom embodied in the laws of this small and obscure Oriental people, so many ages ago, will be manifested in a general political and social happiness such as has never yet been seen, on any large scale at least, in the history of men.

CHAPTER XVIII

SPEAKERS FOR GOD.—II. THE PRIEST

DEUT. xviii. 1-8

THE priesthood naturally follows the kingship in the regulations regarding the position of the governing classes. But it was an older and much more radical constituent in the polity of Israel than we have seen the kingship to be. Originally, the priests were the normal and regular exponents of Yahweh's will. They received and gave forth to the people oracles from Him, and they were the fountain of moral and spiritual guidance. The Torah of the priests, which on the older view was the Pentateuch as we have it, or its substance at least, which Moses had put into their hands, is much more probably now regarded as the guidance given by means of the sacred lot and the Urim and Thummim. Because of their special nearness to and intimacy with God, the priests were in contact with the Divine will and could receive special Divine guidance; and in days when the voice of prophecy was dumb, or in matters which it left untouched, the priestly Torah, or direction, was the one authorised Divine voice. But this was not the only function of the priests. Sacrificial worship was a more fundamental function Wellhausen and his school indeed seem inclined to deny that as priests of Yahweh they had any Divinely ordered connection with sacrifice. But the truer view is that their power to give Torah to Israel depended entirely upon their being the custodians of the places where Yahweh

had caused His name to be remembered. The theory was that, as they approached Him with sacrifices in His sanctuaries, they consequently could speak for Him; so that the guarding of His shrines, and the offering of the people's sacrifices there were their first duties. In fact they were the mediators between Yahweh and Israel. Yahweh was King, but He was invisible, and the priests were His visible earthly representatives. The dues, which in a merely secular state would have gone to the king, as rent for the lands held of him, were employed for their appointed uses by the priests, as the servants and representatives of the heavenly King who had bestowed the land upon Israel and allotted to each family its portion. Occupying a middle position, then, between the two parties to the Covenant by which Israel had become Yahweh's chosen people, they spoke for the people when they appeared before Yahweh, and for Him when they came forth to the people. They were, as we have said, the oldest and most important of the ruling classes, and must have been from early times a special order set apart for the service of Israel's God.

The main passages in Deuteronomy which bear upon the position and character of the priesthood and of the tribe of Levi are the following. In chaps. xviii. 1-8, x. 6-9, and xxvii. 9-14 the strictly priestly functions of the tribe of Levi are dealt with; in xvii. 9ff. xix. 17, the judicial functions; in xxi. 1-5 their function in connection with sanitary matters is referred to. Besides these there are the various injunctions to invite the Levites to the sacrificial feasts, because they have no inheritance, and a number of references to the priesthood as a well-known body, the constitution and duties of which did not need special treatment. These last are of themselves sufficient to prove beyond question that in dealing with the priests and Levites the author of this book writes

from out of the midst of a long established system. He does not legislate for the introduction of priests, neither does he refer to a priestly system recently elaborated by himself, and only now coming into operation. He does not tell us how priests are to be appointed, nor from whom, nor with what ceremonies of consecration they are to be inducted into their office. In fact the writer speaks of what concerns the priests and Levites in a manner which makes it certain that in his day there were, and had long been, Levites who were priests, and Levites of whom it may at least be said that they were probably nothing more than subordinates in regard to religious duty. In a word, while presupposing an established system of priestly and Levitical service, he nowhere attempts to give any clear or complete view of that system. His whole mind is turned towards the people. It is about their duties and their rights he is anxious, about their duties perhaps more than their rights; and he touches upon matters connected with others than the people only in a cursory way. In this matter, especially, he clearly needs to be supplemented by information drawn from other sources, and his every word about it shows that he is not introducing or referring to anything new. Any modifications he makes are plainly stated and are limited to a few special points.

The chief passage for our purpose is, however, xviii. 1-8, where we have the agents of the cultus defined, and directions for the dues to be given them. In ver. 1 these agents are clearly said to be the whole tribe of Levi; for the phrase "The priests, the Levites, the whole tribe of Levi," cannot mean the priests and the Levites who together make up the whole tribe of Levi. Notwithstanding the arguments of Keil and Curtiss and other ingenious scholars, the unprejudiced mind must, I think, accept Dillmann's rendering, "The Levitical priests, the whole

tribe of Levi," the latter clause standing in apposition to the former. In that case Deuteronomy must be held to regard every Levite as in some sense priestly. This view is confirmed by x. 8 f., where distinctly priestly duties are assigned to the "tribe of Levi." Some indeed assert that this verse was written by a later editor, but valid reasons for the assertion are somewhat difficult to find.[1] Neither Kuenen nor Oettli nor Dillmann find any. We may, then, accept it as Deuteronomic since critics of such various leanings do so. To quote Dillmann, "Beyond question, therefore, the tribe as a whole appears here as called to sacred, especially priestly service; only it does not follow from that that every individual member of the tribe could exercise these functions at his pleasure, without there being any organisation and gradation among these servants of God." No, that does not follow; and this very passage (Deut. xviii. 1-8) shows that it does not, for it makes a very clear distinction. In vv. 3 ff. the dues of the priest are dealt with, while in vv. 6 ff. those of the Levite in one special case are provided for. As if to emphasise the distinction between them, the priest in ver. 3 is not called "Levitical," as he is in other passages.

Further, the verses concerning the Levite also emphasise the distinction; for few will be able to adopt the view that here in vv. 6 ff. every Levite who chooses is authorised to become a priest, by the mere process of presenting himself at the central sanctuary. The author of Deuteronomy must have known, better probably than any one now considering this matter, that the priests in the central sanctuary would never consent to divide their privileges and their income with every member of their tribe who might choose to come up to Jerusalem. Indeed, if they had received each and every one, the crowd would have

[1] Kuenen, *H. K. O.*, Eerste Deel, p. 113.

been an embarrassment instead of a help. As a matter of fact, when the Deuteronomic reform came to be put in practice, this free admission of every Levite to the service of the Jerusalem Temple was not adopted, and it is *prima facie* improbable that the author of it can have meant his provision in that sense. The meaning seems to be that, as only those Levites who were employed in the central sanctuary could be *de facto* priests, those living in the country were not priests in the same sense; and the regulation made is that if any Levite came up to Jerusalem and was received into the ranks of the Temple Levites, *i.e.* the sacrificial priests, he should receive the same dues as the others performing the same work did. But though no conditions of admission to the Temple service are mentioned, obviously there must have been some conditions, some division of labour, some organisation involving gradations in rank, and perhaps also some limitation as to time in the case of such voluntary service as is here dealt with. For, as Dillmann points out, it is not said that the service of every Temple Levite is the same; numbers of them may have had no higher work than the Levites under the laws of the Priest Codex.

Moreover the other functions assigned to the priests confirm the argument, and prove that in the time of Deuteronomy distinctions of rank among the Levites must have been firmly established. They had a place in the public justiciary, even in the supreme court, "in the place which Yahweh their God" had chosen (Deut. xvii. 9, xix. 17). Not only so, the law concerning a man found slain in chap. xxi., vv. 1-5, implies that there were in the cities throughout the land priests, the sons of Levi, whom "Yahweh thy God hath chosen to minister unto Him and to bless in the name of Yahweh, and according to their word shall every controversy and every stroke be." Now it cannot possibly have been the intention of

the author of Deuteronomy that every member of the tribe of Levi should have equal power to decide such matters. If in his view every Levite was a priest, then we should have this impossible state of affairs, that the highest courts for judicial process should be in the hands of a class which was more largely indebted to the generosity of the rich for its maintenance than any other in the country. It seems plain therefore that every Levite could not exercise *full* priestly functions because of his birth. Clearly, if any Levite might become a priest it was only in the same sense in which every Napoleonic soldier was said to carry a marshal's baton in his knapsack.[1]

Finally, in this passage (ver. 5), by the words "him and his sons for ever," which refer back to "the priest," a hereditary character of the priesthood is asserted. This phrase is remarkably parallel to that so frequently used by P, "Aaron and his sons"; and though we are not told in what family or families the priesthood was hereditary, it must have been so in some. But in x. 6, 7, the family of Aaron is mentioned by the Deuteronomist as having hereditary right to the priesthood at the central shrine. There can therefore be no doubt that in the time of the author of Deuteronomy priesthood was hereditary, perhaps in several families, but certainly in the family of Aaron.

The remaining point in these verses of chap. xviii. is the dues. As the whole tribe had no land, so the whole

[1] The same conclusion must be come to in connection with the sanitary duties of the priesthood as laid down, or rather as alluded to, in Deut. xxiv. 8, 9. This implies that the Levitical priests had special duties in connection with such matters, duties which, if not precisely the same as those laid down in the Law of Leprosy (Lev. xiii., xiv.), must have nearly resembled them. Semi-medical skill must have been necessary for the satisfactory discharge of these duties, and we must suppose that the priests who discharged them were selected from the tribe of Levi on some principle either of special proved knowledge and fitness, or on the ground of hereditary devotion to such work.

tribe had a share in the dues paid by the people to their Divine King. In vv. 3 ff. we have a statement of what these were. The whole tribe of Levi are to eat "the offerings of Yahweh made by fire, and His inheritance. And they shall have no inheritance among their brethren: Yahweh is their inheritance, as He hath spoken unto them." The only place in Scripture in which such a promise is given is Numb. xviii. 20, 24, so that these passages, if not referred to by the author of Deuteronomy, must be founded upon a tradition already old in his time. As the servants of Yahweh, the Levites were to be wholly Yahweh's care; as His representatives, they were to use for the supply of their needs all such portions of the offerings made to Him by fire as were not to be consumed on the altar. Their remaining provision was to be "His," *i.e.* Yahweh's, "inheritance," or rather "portion," or that which belongs to Him. Now Yahweh's "portion" consisted of all the other sacred dues (besides the sacrifices) which should be paid to Yahweh, such as the tithes, the firstlings, and the firstfruits. On these the whole tribe of Levi was to live, and so be free to give their time to the special business of the sanctuary, and to related duties, in so far as they were called upon.

But there were to be distinctions. In vv. 3-5 we have a special statement of what was to be paid by the people to the priests, *i.e.* the sacrificing priests. Of every animal offered in sacrifice, except those offered as whole burnt-offerings, they were to receive "the shoulder, the two cheeks, and the maw," all choice pieces. Further, they were to receive the "firstfruits of corn, wine, oil, and the first of the fleece of the sheep." For the priests of one sanctuary these would be quite provision enough, though the word translated "firstfruits," *rēshith*, is very indefinite, and probably meant much or little, according as the donor was liberal or churlish. But how does

this agree with that which is bestowed upon the priests according to the Priest Codex? In the passage corresponding to this (Lev. vii. 31-34) the wave breast and the heave thigh are the portions which are to be bestowed upon "Aaron the priest and his sons, as a due for ever from the children of Israel"; and where the first-fruits are dealt with (Numb. xviii. 12 ff.) "the first of the fleece of the sheep" is not mentioned. That is an addition made by the author of Deuteronomy; but what of "the shoulder, the two cheeks, and the maw"? Are they a substitute for the "wave breast and the heave thigh," or are they an addition? If we hold that the laws in the Pentateuch were all given by Moses in the wilderness, and in the order in which they stand, it will be most natural to think that what we have here is meant to be an addition to what Numbers prescribes. But if it is established that Deuteronomy is a distinct work, written at a different period from the other books of the Pentateuch, then, though there is not sufficient evidence to justify a dogmatic decision on either side, the weight of probability is in favour of the supposition that the Deuteronomic provision is a substitute, or at least an alternative, for what we have in Numbers. The fact that the prescription in Numbers is not repeated makes for that view, as well as the fact that Deuteronomy does not as a rule tend to increase the burdens on the people. Keil's view, that Deuteronomy and Numbers are dealing with quite different sacrifices, will hardly stand examination. He thinks that the feasts at which the firstlings, turned into money, and the third-year tithes were eaten, are referred to here, while in Numbers it is the ordinary peace-offerings which are dealt with. But the postponed firstlings were eaten at the sanctuary, and would consequently come under the head of ordinary sacrifices; and the third-year tithes were eaten in the local centres, so that the bringing

of the priestly portions would be as difficult in this case as in the case of the slaughterings for ordinary meals, which Keil, partly for that reason, thinks cannot be referred to here. On the whole, the best opinion seems to be that Deuteronomy has here different prescriptions from those in Numbers, and that probably there is a considerable interval of time between the two.

In vv. 6-8 the Levite as distinguished from the priest is dealt with, though by no means fully. Only in one respect are special regulations given. When such an one came to do duty at the central sanctuary, he was to receive his share of the sacrifices with the rest.

In Chapter I. the main outlines of the Deuteronomic system of priestly arrangements have been placed alongside those of the Book of the Covenant and JE, and those of P, with a view to decide whether they could all have been the work of one lawgiver's life. Here they must be compared in order that we may ascertain whether a view of the development of the priestly tribe which will do justice to these various documents and their provisions can be suggested.

Some schools of critics offer the hypothesis that there was no special priesthood till late in the time of the kings. From the beginning, they say, the head of each household was the family priest, and secular men, such as the kings, and men of other tribes than the Levites, could be and were priests, and offered sacrifice even at Jerusalem. With Deuteronomy the tribe of Levi was established as the priestly tribe, and only after the Exile was priesthood restricted to the sons of Aaron. But this scheme does justice to one set of passages only at the expense of another. It accounts for all that is anomalous in the history, and pushes aside the main and consistent affirmation of all our authorities, that from the earliest days the tribe of Levi had a special connection with sacred things and

a special position in Israel. To what straits its advocates are reduced may be seen in the fact that Wellhausen has to declare that there were two tribes of Levi, one purely secular that was all but destroyed in an attack upon Shechem, and which afterwards disappeared, and a later ecclesiastical and somewhat factitious tribe, or caste, which "towards the end of the monarchy arose out of the separate priestly families of Judah."[1] A more improbable suggestion than that can hardly be conceived.

But historical analogy, the favourite weapon of these very critics, also condemns it. Let us look at the growth of the priesthood in other ancient nations. In small and isolated communities the head of the household was generally the family priest, and in all probability this was the case in the various separate tribes of which Israel was composed; at least it was so in the households of the patriarchs. But, in communities formed by amalgamation of different tribes—and according to modern ideas Israel was so formed—there was almost always superinduced upon that more primitive state of things another and different arrangement. In antiquity no bond could hold together tribes or families conscious of different descent, save the bond of religion. Consequently, whenever such an amalgamation took place, the very first thing which had to be done was to establish religious rites common to the whole new community, which of course were not the care of the heads of households as such. Each separate section of the composite body kept up, no doubt, the family rites; but there had to be a common worship, and of course a special priesthood, for the new community. This is sufficiently attested for the Greeks and Romans by De Coulanges, who in his *La Cité Antique* gathers together such a mass of authorities in

[1] *History of Israel*, p. 145.

regard to this matter that few will be inclined to dispute his conclusion. On page 146 he says: "Several tribes might unite, on condition that the worship of each was respected. When such an alliance was entered into, the city or state came into existence. It is of little importance to inquire into the causes which induced several tribes to unite; what is certain is that the bond of the new association was again a religion. The tribes which grouped themselves to form a state never failed to light a sacred fire, and to set up a common religion." But the family and tribal rites continued to exist as *sacra privata*, just as the central government dominated but did not destroy the family and tribal governments.[1]

It may be objected that these customs are proved only for the Aryan races, and that, though proved for them, they form no valid analogy for Semitic peoples. But besides the fact that part of the statements we have quoted are obviously true of Israel, we have a guarantee that the principle enunciated is also valid for it. The whole process traced in the religious progress of the Aryan nations is based upon the worship of ancestors. Now one of the critical discoveries is that ancestor-worship was a part of the religion of the tribes which afterwards united to form the Israelite nation. Some, like Stade, tell us that that was the early religion of Israel itself. In that form the theory is, I think, to be rejected; but there would seem to be little doubt that, before the birth of the nation, ancestor-worship was much practised by the Hebrew tribes. If so, we may quite safely take over the analogy we have established, and believe that when Moses united the tribes into a nation, the religion of Yahweh was the absolutely necessary connecting link which bound them together. For though the tribes were

[1] Cf. also Muirhead, article "Roman Law," in *Ency. Brit.*, vol. xx. p. 669, 2nd col., and Ramsay, *Church in Roman Empire*, p. 190.

related, and are represented as the descendants of Abraham, they must have varied considerably from each other in religious beliefs and usages. By Moses these variations were extinguished, as far as that was possible, by the establishment of an exclusive Yahweh-worship as the national cult; and to carry on this, not the heads of households, but a priesthood that represented the nation, must have been selected. But if so, who would most naturally be selected for this duty? A sentence from De Coulanges will show that in this case the tribe of Levi would almost necessarily be chosen. Speaking of cases in which a composite state relieved itself of the trouble of inventing a new worship by adopting the special god of one of the component tribes, he says: "But when a family consented to share its god in this fashion it reserved for itself at least the priesthood." Now if that was the case in Israel, the priesthood of the tribe of Levi would at once become a necessity. Whether Yahweh had been ever known to the other tribes or not, there can be little doubt that the knowledge of Him which made them a nation and started them on their unique career of spiritual discovery came from the Mosaic tribe, and family.

The God whom the family worshipped became the God of the confederacy, and they would be the natural guardians of His sanctuary. This would not in the least involve special sanctity and meekness on the part of the tribe, as some insist. They would remain a tribe, like the others; but their leading men would discharge the functions of priests for the confederated nation. It is difficult, indeed, to see why any one else should have been thought of: most likely the arrangement was made as a thing of course.

But if there was such a common worship, there must have been a sanctuary for it, and at it the Levitic priests must have discharged their functions. Now though the

Tabernacle, as P knows it, is not spoken of either in JE or in Deuteronomy, a "tent of meeting" at which Jehovah revealed Himself to Moses and to which the people went to seek Yahweh (Exod. xxxiii. 7 ff.) is known to all our authorities. Further, Wellhausen himself says, "If Moses did anything at all he certainly founded the sanctuary at Qadesh and the Torah there, which the priests of the ark carried on after him," so that even he recognises the necessity we have pointed out. From the days of Moses onwards, therefore, there must have been special priests of Yahweh, a special Yahwistic sanctuary, ritual with a special sacrifice presented to Yahweh, and lastly a central oracle, which is precisely what the passages explained away by Wellhausen assert. But of course at that early time, even if the ultimate purpose was to have an exclusively Levitical priesthood, concessions to the old state of things would have to be made. The Passover was left in the hands of the household priest, and in other ways probably he would be considered. The old order would insist on surviving, and the rigour of the later arrangements cannot then have been attained. In other respects we know that it was so; and we may well believe that the priesthood of the individual householder and of the rulers was tolerated, and as far as possible regulated, so as to offer no public scandal to the religion of Yahweh. So, among the Homeric Greeks special hereditary priesthoods coexisted with a political priesthood of the head of the State, and with the household priesthood.[1]

The laxity on these points ascribed to Moses is, however, less than has been supposed. At Mount Sinai he certainly did appoint the "young men of the children of Israel"[2] to slaughter the beasts for sacrifice; but he reserved for himself, a Levite, the sprinkling of the

[1] Rägelsbach, *Homerische Theologie*, p. 198.

[2] Exod. xxiv. 5.

blood on the altar.[1] He also made Joshua his servant, an Ephraimite, the keeper of the sanctuary; but even under the Levitical law, a priest's slave was reckoned to be of his household and could eat of the holy things. These were not very great laxities, and there is nothing in them to make us suppose that a regular priesthood did not exist from Sinai. Moreover, that a special place should be assigned to Aaron and his sons was natural. He was the brother of Moses, and would be the natural representative of the tribe, since Moses was removed from it as being leader of all. Everything therefore concurs to confirm the Biblical view that the Levitic priesthood had its origin at Sinai, and that at the chief sanctuary and oracle the chief place in the priesthood fell to Aaron and his sons. Worship at other sanctuaries was permitted, and there the heads of households may have performed priestly functions, or in later times in Canaan some other Levitic families; but that there was a central sanctuary in the hands of Levitic priests, among whom the family of Aaron had a chief place, is what the circumstances, the historical data we have, and all historical analogy alike demand.

For the discharge of their sacred functions certain dues were doubtless assigned to the priests, and the Levites sharing in the subordinate duties of the sanctuary would share also in the emoluments. In other respects Levi in the wilderness would differ in nothing from other tribes. But in preparation for the arrival in Canaan, it was decreed that Levi should "have no part or inheritance in Israel." Yahweh was to be their inheritance.

The point to notice here is that this tribe was to retain the nomadic life when the other tribes became agricultural. The reason for it is plain. That ancient manner of life was looked upon as superior in a religious aspect to the agricultural life. In the first place, the ancestral

[1] Exod. xxxiii. 11.

life of Israel had been of that kind. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been heads of nomadic families or tribes; and the pure and peaceful religious life, the intimate communion with God which they enjoyed, always dominated the imagination of the pious Israelite. Moreover the fundamental revelation had come to Moses when he was a shepherd in the waste. Further, the life of the shepherd is necessarily less continuously busy than that of the agriculturist; it has, therefore, more scope in it for contemplation; and in many countries and at various times shepherds have been a specially thoughtful, as well as a specially pious class. But, perhaps the chief reason was that the shepherd life was not only simple and frugal in itself, but it was also by its very conditions free from some of the greatest dangers to which the religious life of the Israelite in Canaan was exposed. When the bulk of the people adopted the settled life, they were not only thrown among the Canaanites, but they went to school to them in all that concerned elaborate agriculture. This necessarily made the intercourse and connection between the two peoples extremely intimate, and was fruitful in evil results. From this the semi-nomadic portions of the people were to a great extent free, and they would seem to have been regarded as the guardians of a higher life and a purer tradition than others. They represented to the popular mind the Israel of ancient days, which had known nothing of the vices of cities, and in which the pure uncorrupted religion of Yahweh had held exclusive sway.

A remarkable narrative of the Old Testament establishes this. When Jehu was engaged in his sanguinary suppression of the house of Ahab, and the Baal-worship which they had introduced, we read in 2 Kings x. 15 ff. that he lighted on Jonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him. This Jonadab was the chief of the Rechabites, a

nomadic clan, who were bound by oath to drink no wine, nor to build houses, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyards, and to dwell in tents all their days (Jer. xxxv. 6, 7). This was clearly intended as a protest against the prevailing corruption of manners, and was founded on a special zeal for the uncorrupted religion of Yahweh. Recognising Jonadab's position as a champion of true religion, Jehu anxiously seeks his approval and co-operation. He says, "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?" And Jonadab answered, "It is." "If it be," said Jehu, "give me thine hand." And he gave him his hand, and he took him up to him into the chariot. And he said, "Come with me, and see my zeal for Yahweh." At a much later time, Jeremiah, at the Divine command, used the faithfulness of these nomads to the ordinances of their chiefs to put to shame the unfaithfulness of Israel to Yahweh's ordinances; and promises (Jer. xxxv. 19) that because of it "Jonadab the son of Rechab shall never want a man to stand before Yahweh," *i.e.* as His servant. The Nazarites, again, were in some measure an indication of the same thing. Their rigorous abstinence from the fruit of the vine (the special sign and gift of a settled life in a country like Palestine) was their great distinguishing mark, as persons peculiarly set apart to the service of God. Something analogous is seen in that other desert faith, Mohammedanism. When the great reformer, Abd-el-Wahab, attempted to bring back Islam to its primitive power, he fell back largely upon the simplicity of the desert life, though he did not insist upon the abandonment of agriculture and fixed habitations.

It is, therefore, not surprising that the priestly tribe was kept to the nomadic life by the ordinance that they should not have a portion in the distribution of the Canaanite territory. But according to the narrative of the attack upon Shechem by Levi and Simeon, and the

verses in the blessing of Jacob (Gen. xlix.) dealing with these tribes, the course of history reinforced this command. Whether the treachery at Shechem occurred, as the Genesis narrative places it, before the Exodus, when Israel was only a family, or was an incident in the history of the two tribes after Canaan had been invaded, as many critics think,[1] the significance of it is that because of an historical exhibition of fierce and intolerant zeal on the part of Levi and Simeon, which the other tribes would not defend, their settlement in that part of the land was rendered difficult, if not impossible. Hence Simeon had to seek other settlements, while Levi fell back to the position assigned to it by its priestly character. It is not a valid exception to this view—which reconciles the two statements that Levi had no inheritance with the other tribes because of its specially near relation to Yahweh, and also because of its cruel treachery at Shechem—that a priestly tribe is likely to have been not more, but rather less, fierce than the others. That would entirely depend upon the cause or occasion which called out the fierceness. In all that concerned religion Levi would naturally be more inclined to extreme measures than the other tribes, and in this case the higher morality, secured by the separateness of Israel, might easily appear to be at stake.[2] It is, therefore, quite credible that the excessive vengeance taken should have been planned mainly by Levi, and that the resulting hatred should have broken up Simeon, and driven back Levi with emphasis to its higher call.

In any case there never was again any doubt that the Levites were to be excluded from the number of land-owning tribes. Even in the legislation regarding the forty-eight priestly cities this principle asserts itself. The keeping of sheep and cattle on the pastures, which

[1] Cf. Kittel's *Geschichte der Hebräër*, II., p. 63.

[2] Cf. Exod. xxxii. 15-20

were the only lands attached to these cities, was to be the Levites' only secular occupation, and they were neither to own nor work agricultural land. But to compensate for any hardship this arrangement might bring with it, the Levites, as the special servants of Yahweh, were to have Him for their inheritance, *i.e.* as we have seen, the dues coming to Yahweh were to become the property of the Levites in great part. I say in great part, because the gift to the Levites exclusively of a tithe of the income of the people is thought by many to be only a late provision.

After Canaan had been conquered, the state of things in connection with the priesthood would be something like this. The tent with the ark would be the principal sanctuary, served by a hereditary Levitic priesthood, at the head of which would be a descendant of Aaron. The tribe of Levi, being nomadic, would probably encamp in the neighbourhood of the central sanctuary in part, and recruits for the priestly work would be taken occasionally from them, while other sections would gravitate to the neighbourhood of other sanctuaries. As we see from the story of Micah in Judges, it was considered desirable to have a Levite for priest everywhere, and consequently there would arise at all the High Places Levitic priesthoods, most probably in part hereditary. But notwithstanding their dues, the bulk of the tribe, being nomads, would be looked upon by the agricultural population as poor, just as the Bedouin, in Palestine now are, comparatively speaking, very poor. This state of things would correspond entirely with what Deuteronomy tells us; and after that legislation the position of the Levites as a priestly body would be more assured than ever. In the post-exilic period all that had been regulated by practice in earlier days found written expression. Differentiation of function was minutely carried out. The priesthood was confined rigorously to the Aaronic house, and the other Levites

were given to them as attendants. In this way the whole Levitic system was introduced, and with the exclusive altar came the exclusive priesthood. So far as I can see, it is only by some such hypothesis that justice can be done to *all* the statements of Scripture; and considering the elastic nature of Old Testament law, there is nothing improbable in it. In any case there is an amount of evidence of various kinds for the Mosaic origin of the Levitic, and even the Aaronic priesthood, which no proof of irregularities can overturn.

In the Divinely sanctioned arrangements of the Old Testament Church, therefore, the existence of a body of ecclesiastical persons, having little share in the ordinary pursuits of their neighbours, and dependent upon their clerical duties for a large part of their maintenance, was deemed necessary to secure the continuity of worship and religious belief. As has been already pointed out, the priesthood was necessarily more conservative than progressive. As an institution, it was suited rather to gather up and perpetuate the results of religious movements otherwise originated, than to originate them itself. But in that sphere it was an absolutely necessary element in the life of Israel. Difficult as it was to permeate the people with the truths of revealed religion, it would have been impossible without the services of the priestly tribe. Wherever they went they were a visible embodiment of the demand for faithfulness to Yahweh, and, with all their aberrations, they probably lived at a higher spiritual level than the average layman. As has been well said, though Malachi had much reason to complain of the priests in his own day, his estimate of what Levi had been in the past is no exaggeration (ii. 6): "The law of truth was in his mouth, and unrighteousness was not found in his lips: he walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and did turn many away from iniquity." But such a body as the

Levites could not have been kept thus spiritually alive, unless the members of it had lived somewhat aloof from the strifes and envies of the market-place, and this they could not have done had they not lived by their sacred function. The prophets, under the power and impulse of new truth adapted to their own time, did not need this protection; consequently some of them were called from ordinary secular work—from the plough, like Elisha, or from the midst of the rich and highborn inhabitants of Jerusalem, like Isaiah. If one may so say, they were men of religious genius; while the bulk of the priests and Levites must always have been commonplace men in comparison. Yet even of the prophets a number were trained in the nomadic life; others were priests who were shut off also from agriculture. Clearly, therefore, some measure of separation from the full pulsing life of the world was, even in the most favourable circumstances, helpful in developing religious character. For the ordinary average ecclesiastic it was indispensable; and that he should exist, and should live at as high a level as possible, was as much a condition of Israel's discharge of her great mission, as that the voice of the prophet should be heard at all the great turning-points of her career.

The modern tendency in Old Testament study is to depreciate the priest and to exalt the prophet, just as in ecclesiastical life we tend to make much of those who are or give themselves out to be religious reformers and thinkers, and to make little of the ordinary parish or congregational ministry. But the good done by the latter is, and must be, for each individual generation more than that done by the former. No one can estimate too highly the conserving and elevating effect of a faithful high-minded spiritual minister. Often without genius either intellectual or religious, without much speculative power, with so firm a hold of the old truth, which has been

their own guiding star, that they cannot readily see the good in anything new, such men, when faithful to the light they have, are the stable, restful, immediately effective element in all Church life. And such a body can be best spiritualised by being separated somewhat from the stress and strain of competition in the race of life. Being what they are, the necessity of taking their full part in the business of the world would inevitably secularise them, to the great and lasting damage of all spiritual interests. For though to modern students of Old Testament religion, who are interested most in its growth and progress towards its consummation in Christianity, the prophet is by far the most interesting figure, to the ancient people itself it must have seemed that the priests and Levites, if they in any degree deserved Malachi's eulogy, were the entirely indispensable element in their religious life. They gave the daily bread of religion to the people. They embodied the principles which came to them from prophetic inspiration in ceremonies and institutions; they treasured up whatever had been gained, and kept the people nurtured in it and admonished by it. In short, they prepared the soil and cultivated the roots from which alone the consummate flower of prophecy could spring; and when the voice of prophecy was dying away they brought the piety of the average Israelite to the highest point it ever reached.

In modern times the necessity for such a body of special churchmen is challenged from two opposite sides. There is, on the one hand, the body of over-spiritualised believers who abhor organisation, and the machinery of organisation, as if it were an intolerable evil. Conscious very often of quick spiritual impulse and vivid life in themselves, they fret against the slow movements of large bodies of men; they separate themselves from all the organised Churches and reject a regular ministry. All

the Lord's people are now, under the Christian dispensation, priests and prophets, they say, and a separate paid ministry in sacred things they refuse to hear of. For spiritual nourishment they rely solely upon the prophetic gifts of their members, and are satisfied that thus they are preparing the way for the universal prevalence of a higher form of Church life. But, so far as can be judged, their experiment has not prospered, nor is it likely to do so. For these separatist Christians have found that spiritual life, like other kinds of life, cannot express itself without an organism. That implies organisation; and though they do with less of it than other Christians, still they are often driven into arrangements which really bring back the regular ministry with its separate position; and in other respects they are saved from the inconveniences they have fled from, only by their want of success. If their system ever became general, it would necessarily drift into organisation, for only at that price can any coherent, continuous, and lasting effect be produced. Unfettered by the dull, the critical, and the judicious, the impulsive and enthusiastic would always be outrunning the possibilities of the present time. In the interests of the best, they would be continually ignoring or destroying the good. To prevent that, a special body of religious men set apart for sacred services, and freed from the rough struggle for existence so far as a maintenance from funds devoted to religious purposes can free them, is one of the best provisions known. Where in the mass they are really religious men, they secure that the pressure upward, which the Church exerts upon the lives of its own members and upon the community in general, shall be effective to the highest degree then possible, and shall be exerted in the directions in which such pressure will most fully answer to the needs and aspirations of the time. Where, on the contrary, the

mass of them are secularised, they no doubt are a power for evil; but the contrast between their profession and their practice in that case is so shocking, that unless they be supported by the "dead hand" of endowments with no living spiritual demand behind them, they soon sink by their own weight, to give place to a better type. And even when they are thus supported, though unfaithful, their calling in name at least remains spiritual, and sooner than the other elements in the nation they are apt to be stirred by breathings of a new life.

The other objectors to the regular ministry are those, in the press and elsewhere, who demand of all ministers that they should be prophets, or inspired religious geniuses, and, because they are not, deny their right to exist. According to this view every sermon that is not a new revelation is a failure, every minister of the sanctuary who is not a discoverer in religion is a pretender, every one who only exemplifies and lives by the power of the Gospel, as it was last formulated so as to lay hold upon the popular mind, is an obscurantist. But no reasonable man really believes this. Such reproaches are merely the penalty which must be paid for claiming so high a calling as that of an ambassador for Christ. No man can quite adequately fill such a position; and the bulk of ministers of Christ know better than others how much below their ideal their real service is. But this also is true, that, take them all in all, no class of men are doing anything like so much as Christian ministers throughout the world are doing to keep up the standard of morals and to keep alive faith in that which is spiritual. We have no right to complain that in their sphere they are conservative of that which has been handed on to them. They have tried and proved that teaching; they know that wherever it secures a foothold it lifts men up to God, and they are naturally doubtful whether new and untried teaching will do as

much. They have pressing upon them, too, as others have not, the interest of individual men and women whom they see and know, men and women who for the most part, and so far as they can see, are accessible to spiritual impulse only on lines with which they are familiar; and they dread the diversion of their thoughts from their real spiritual interests, to matters which, for them at least, must remain largely intellectual and speculative. No doubt it would be well if all pastors could, as the most highly endowed do, look beyond that narrower field; could take account of the movements which are drifting men into new positions, from which the old landmarks cannot be seen and consequently exert no influence; and could endeavour to rethink their Christianity from new points of view, which may be about to become the orthodoxy of the next generation. But no ministry will ever be a ministry of prophets. It may even be doubted whether such a ministry could be borne if it ever should arise. Under it one might fear that spiritual repose and spiritual growth would alike be impossible for the average man, in his breathless race after teachers each of whom was always catching sight of new lights. The mass of men need, first of all, teachers who have firmly seized the common truth by which the Church of their day lives, who live conspicuously nearer the Christian ideal, as generally conceived, than others do, who devote themselves in sincerity and self-sacrifice to the work of making the things that are most surely believed among Christians a common and abiding possession. Such men need never be ashamed of themselves or of their calling. Theirs is the foundation work, so far as any attempt to realise the Kingdom of God on earth is concerned; for without the general acceptance of the truth attained which they bring about, no further attainment would be possible. The very environment out of which alone the prophet could be

developed would be wanting, and stagnation and death would certainly and necessarily follow.

One other thing remains to be said. Though we have taken these significant words of ver. 2—"And they shall have no inheritance among their brethren: Yahweh is their inheritance, as He hath spoken unto them"—in their first and most obvious reference, it is not to be supposed that that meaning has exhausted all that the words conveyed to ancient Israel. The perpetuation of the nomadic form of life among the Levites, and the bestowal of tithes and sacrificial meats upon them, was undoubtedly the first purpose of this command. But it had, even for ancient Israel, a more spiritual meaning. Just as in the promise of Canaan as a dwelling-place the spiritual Israelite never regarded *merely* the gift of wealth and the prospect of comfort,—Canaan was always for them Yahweh's land, the land where they would specially live near Him and find the joy of His presence,—so in this case the spiritual gift, of which the material was only an expression, is the main thing. To have Yahweh for their heritage can never have meant *only* so much money and provisions, so much leisure and opportunity for contemplation, to any true son of Levi. Otherwise it is inexplicable how the words used to indicate this very earthly thing should have become so acceptable a formula for the deepest spiritual experience of Christian men. It meant also a spiritual bond between Yahweh and His servants—a special nearness on their part, and a special condescension on His. To the other tribes Yahweh had given His land, to them He had given Himself as a heritage; and though doubtless any unspiritual son of Levi must have thought the tangible advantages of a fertile farm more attractive than visionary nearness to God, the spiritual among the Levites must have felt that they had received the really good part, which no hostile invasion,

no oppression of the rich, could ever take away. Their ordinary life-work brought them more into contact with sacred things than others. The goodness, the mercy, the love of God were, or at least ought to have been, clearer to them than to their brethren; and the joy of doing good to men for God's sake, the rapture of contemplation which possessed them when they were privileged to see the face of God, must have made all the coarser benefits of the earthly heritage seem worse than nothing and vanity. Of course there was the danger that familiarity with religious things should dull instead of quickening the insight; and many passages in the Old Testament show that this danger was not always escaped. But often, and for long periods, it must have been warded off; and then the superiority of God's gift of Himself must have been manifest, not only to the chosen tribe, but to all Israel. For the nature of man is too intrinsically noble ever to be quite satisfied with the world, and the riches and comforts of the world, for its inheritance. At no time has man ever failed to do homage to spiritual gifts. Even to-day, in spheres outside of religion, there are multitudes of men and women who would put aside without a sigh any wealth the world could give, if it were offered as a substitute for their delight in poetry, or for their power to rethink and re-enjoy the ideas of those whose "thoughts have wandered through eternity." And the power to follow and to yield oneself up to the thoughts of the Eternal God Himself is a reward far above these. To the faithful servant of God at all times and in all lands that joy has been open, for God Himself has been their heritage; and though in ancient Israel the beauty of "Yahweh their God" was not quite unveiled, yet we know from the Psalms that many penetrated even then to the inner glory where God meets His chosen, and there, though having nothing, yet found that in Him they had all.

CHAPTER XIX

SPEAKERS FOR GOD—III. THE PROPHET

DEUT. xviii. 9-22

THE third of the Divine voices to this nation was the prophet. Just as in the other Semitic nations round about Israel there were kings and priests and soothsayers, there were to be in Israel kings and priests and prophets; and the first two orders having been discussed, there remains for consideration the prophet, in so far at least as he was to be the substitute for the soothsayer. That this parallel was in the mind of the writer, and that he probably intended only to deal with certain aspects of the prophetic office, is witnessed by the fact that he introduces what he has to say regarding the prophet by a stern and detailed denunciation of any dealings with soothsayers and wizards. In the earlier codes the same denunciation is found, but the catalogue of names for those who practised such arts is nowhere so extensive as it is here. In the Book of the Covenant the *mekhashsheph*, or magician, alone is mentioned (Exod. xxii. 17); while the peculiar code which is contained in the last chapters of Leviticus,[1] mentions only five varieties of sorcerers. The Deuteronomic list of eight is thus the most complete; and Dillmann may be right in regarding it as also the latest. But the special indignation of the writer of Deuteronomy against these forms of superstition would be quite sufficient to account for

[1] Only two in any one law; Lev. xviii. 21, xix. 26, 31, xx. 6, 27.

his elaborate detail. If he lived in the days of Manasseh, he would have before his eyes the passing of children through the fire to Moloch. That was connected with soothsaying and was the crowning horror of Israel's idolatry. The author of Deuteronomy might, therefore, well be more passionate and detailed in his denunciations than others, whether earlier or later.

Nor let any one imagine that in this he was wrong and unenlightened. Whether we believe in the occasional appearance of abnormal powers of the soothsaying kind or not, it is evident that in every nation's life there has been a time in which faith in the existence of such powers was universal, and in which the moral and spiritual life of men has been threatened in the gravest way by the proceedings of those who claimed to possess them. At this hour the witch-doctor, with his cruelties and frauds, is the incubus that rests upon all the semi-civilised or wholly uncivilised peoples of Africa. Even British justice has to lay hands upon him in New Guinea, as the following extract from a Melbourne newspaper will show: "Divination by means of evil spirits is practised to such an extent and with such evil effects by the natives of New Guinea that the Native Regulation Board of British New Guinea has found it necessary to make an ordinance forbidding it. The regulation opens with the statement, 'White men know that sorcery is only deceit, but the lies of the sorcerer frighten many people; the deceit of the sorcerer should be stopped.' It then proceeds to point out that it is forbidden for any person to practise or to pretend to practise sorcery, or for any person to threaten any other person with sorcery, whether practised by himself or any one else. Any one found guilty of sorcery may be sentenced by a European magistrate to three months' imprisonment, or by a native magistrate to three days' imprisonment, and he will be compelled

to work in prison without payment." Through the sorcerer attempts at advance to a higher life are in our own day being rendered futile; at his instigation the darkest crimes are committed; and because of him and the beliefs he inculcates men are kept all their lives subject to bondage. So also of old. The ancient soothsayer might be an impostor in everything, but he was none the less dangerous for that. To what depths of wickedness his practices can bring men is seen in the horrors of the secret cult of the negroes of Hayti. Even when soothsaying and magic were connected with higher religions than the fetichism of the Haytian negro, they were still detrimental in no ordinary degree. No worthy conception of God could grow up where these were dominant, and toleration of them was utterly impossible for the religion of Yahweh.

The justice of the punishment of death decreed against wizards and witches in Scripture was, therefore, quite independent of the reality of the powers such persons claimed. They professed and were believed to have them, and thus they acquired an influence which was fatal to any real belief in a moral and spiritual government of the world. They must therefore be an "abomination" to Yahweh; and as, in any case, by the very fact that they were soothsayers and diviners they practised low forms of idolatry, those who sought them must share the condemnation of the idolater in Israel. In the earlier days of the sacred history there was no enemy so subtle, so insidious, so difficult to meet as magic and soothsaying. Only by actual prohibition, on pain of death, could the case be adequately met; and under these circumstances there is no need for us to apologise for the Old Testament law, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Exod. xxii. 17). What is aimed at here is the profession on the part of any woman that she had and used these supernatural

powers. This was a crime against Israel's higher life. The punishment of it had no resemblance to the judicial cruelties perpetrated in comparatively modern times, when the charge of being a witch became a weapon against people, who for the most part were guilty only of being helpless and lonely.

But it is characteristic of the large outlook of Deuteronomy that not only is the evil protested against; the universal human need which underlay it is acknowledged and supplied. Behind all the terrible aberrations of heathen soothsaying and divination the author saw hunger for a revelation of the will and purpose of God. That was worthy of sympathy, however inadequate and evil the substitutes elaborated for the really Divine means of enlightenment were. So he promises that the real need will be supplied by God's holy prophets. Nothing that savoured of ignorance or misapprehension of God's spirituality, or of unfaithfulness to Yahweh, could be tolerated; for Israel's God would supply all their need by a prophet from the midst of them, of their brethren, like unto Moses, in whose mouth Yahweh would put His words, and who should speak unto them all that He should command him. This is the broadest and most general legitimation of the prophet, as a special organ of revelation in Israel, that the Scripture contains. By it he is made one of the regularly constituted channels of Divine influence for his people. For it is evidently not one single individual, such as the Messiah, who is here foretold. That has been the interpretation received from the earlier Jews, and cherished in the Church up till quite modern times. But as Keil rightly says, the fact that this promise is set against any supposed need to have recourse to diviners and wizards, is in itself sufficient proof that the prophetic order is meant. It was not only in the far-off Messianic time that Israel was to find in this Divinely sent prophet

that knowledge of God's will and purposes which it needed. Israel of all times, tempted by the customs of its heathen neighbours to go to the diviners, was to have in Yahweh's prophet a continual deliverance from the temptation. That implies that this *Nabhi*, or prophet like unto Moses, was to be continually recurring, at every turn and crisis of this nation's career.

Further, the direction in the end of the passage for testing the prophets, whether they were really sent of God or not, confirms this view. It would be singularly out of place in a promise which referred to the Messiah in an exclusive and primary fashion. He would never need testing of this sort, for He was to be the realisation and embodiment of Israel's highest aspirations. But if the passage means to give the prophets a place among the national organs of intercourse with Yahweh alongside of the priests, the necessity of distinguishing these true and Divinely given prophets from pretenders was urgent. The context, both before and after the promise, seems, therefore, to be decisively in favour of the general reference; and the phrases "like unto me," "like unto thee," *i.e.* Moses, when carefully examined, instead of weakening that inference, strengthen it. They are not used here as the similar phrase is used in Deut. xxxiv. 10: "And there hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom Yahweh knew face to face." There the closeness of Moses' approach to Yahweh is the point in hand, and it is clearly stated that in that regard Moses was more favoured than any who had succeeded him. But here the comparison is between Moses and the prophets, in so far as mediation between Yahweh and His people was concerned. At Israel's own wish Moses had been appointed to hear the Divine voice. Israel had said "Let me not hear again the voice of Yahweh my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not."

The prophet here promised was to be like Moses in that respect, but there is nothing to assert that he would be equal to Moses in power and dignity. On all grounds, therefore, the reference to the line of prophets is to be maintained.

Still, the interpretation thus reached does not exclude—it distinctly includes—the Messianic reference. If the passage promises that at all moments of difficulty and crisis in Israel's history, the will of God would be made known by a Divinely sent prophet, that would be specially true of the last and greatest crisis, the birth of the new time which the Messiah was to inaugurate. Whatever fulfilment the promise might receive previously to that, it could not be perfectly fulfilled without the advent of Him whose office it was to close up the history of the present world, and bring all things by a safe transition into the new Messianic world. That was the greatest crisis; and necessarily the prophet who spoke for Yahweh in it must be the crown of the long line of prophets. There is still a higher sense in which this promise has reference to the Messiah. He was to sum up and realise in Himself all the possibilities of Israel. Now they were the prophetic nation, the people who were to reveal God to mankind; and when they proved prevailingly false to their higher calling, the hopes of all who remained faithful turned to that "true" Israel which alone would inherit the promises. At one period, just before and in the Exile, the prophetic order would appear to have been looked upon as the Israel within Israel, to whom it would fall to accomplish the great things to which the seed of Abraham had been called. But the author of Second Isaiah, despairing even of them, saw that the destiny of Israel would be accomplished by one great Servant of Yahweh, who should outshine all other prophets, as He would surpass all other Israelite priests and Davidic kings.

As the crown and embodiment of all that the prophets had aspired to be, the Messiah alone completely fulfilled this promise, and consequently the Messianic reference is organically one with the primary reference. They are so intimately interwoven that nothing but violence can separate them; and thus we gain a deeper insight into the wide reach of the Divine purposes, and the organic unity of the Divine action in the world. These form a far better guarantee for the recognition of Messianic prophecy here than the supposed direct and exclusive reference did. By not grasping too desperately at the view which more strikingly involves the supernatural, we nave received back with "full measure pressed down and running over" the assurance that God was really speaking here, and that this, like all the promises of the Old Testament when rightly understood, is yea and amen in Christ.

But for our present purpose the primary reference of this passage to the prophetic line is even more important than the secondary but most vital reference to the Messiah. For it sets forth prophecy as the most potent instrument for the growth and furtherance of the religion of Israel. The prophet is here declared to be the successor of Moses, to be the inspired declarer of the Divine will to His people in cases which did not come within the sphere or the competency of the priest. The latter was, as we have seen, bound to work within the limits and on the basis of the revelation given by Moses. He was to carry out into execution what had been commanded, to keep alive in the hearts of the people the knowledge of their God as Moses had given it, to give "Torah" from the sanctuary in accordance with its principles. But here a nobler office is assigned to the prophet. He is to enlarge and develop the work of Moses. The Mosaic revelation is here viewed as fundamental and normative, but, in contrast to the views of later Judaism, as by no means

complete. For the completion of it the prophet is here declared to be the Divinely chosen instrument, and he is consequently assigned a higher position in the purpose of God than either king or priest. He is raised far above the diviners by having his calling lifted into the moral sphere; and he excels both the other organs of national life in that, while they are largely bound by the past, he is called of God to initiate new and higher stages in the life of the chosen people. The ascending steps of the revelation begun by Moses were to be in his hands, and through him God was to reveal Himself in ever fuller measure.

Viewed thus, the prophetic order in Israel has a quite unique character. It is a provision for religious progress such as had no parallel elsewhere in the world; and this public acknowledgment of its Divine right is almost more remarkable. Wherever elsewhere in the world religion has been supposed to be Divinely given through one man, though modifications have indeed been made in later times, yet they have never been anticipated and provided for beforehand. Save in the case of Mohammedanism, which borrowed its idea of the office of the prophet from Judaism, there has never been a deliberate admission that God had yet higher things to reveal concerning Himself, still less has provision been made for the coming of that which was new to fulfil the old. And in modern times the revealer of new aspects of truth finds nowhere a welcome. Instead of being received as a messenger of God, even in the Christian Church he has always to face neglect, often persecution, and only if he be unusually fortunate does he live to see his message received. But in Israel, even in such ancient days as those we are dealing with, the progressive nature of God's Revelation of Himself was acknowledged, the reception of new truth was legitimised and looked for, and the highest place in

the earthly kingdom of God was reserved for those whom God had enlightened by it. It is true of course that the nation as a whole never acted in accordance with this teaching. They did not obey the command given here, "Unto him shall ye hearken," and reiterated still more solemnly in the words, "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto My words, which he shall speak in My name, I will require of him." The prophets for the most part spoke to their contemporaries in vain. Where they were not neglected they were persecuted, and many sealed their testimony with their blood. But the thought that Yahweh was educating His people step by step, and that at all times in their history He would have further revelations of Himself to make, is familiar to this writer. Therefore he welcomes the thought of advance in this region of things, and here solemnly enrols those who are to be the instruments of it among the ruling powers of the nation.

Now in religious thought this is quite unparalleled. Tenacious conservatism, based on the conviction that full truth has already been attained, has always been the mark of religious thinking. That a religious teacher should be able to see that the light of revelation, like the natural light, must come gradually, broadening by degrees into perfect day, and that he himself was standing only in the morning twilight, is a thing so remarkable that one is at a loss to account for it, save on the ground of the special nature of prophetic enlightenment. It was part of the office of the prophets to foresee and foretell the future. Smend is certainly in the right, as against those who have been teaching that the prophet was merely a preacher of genius, when he says that "in Amos and his successors prophecy is the starting-point of their whole discourse and action," and that "all new knowledge which they preach comes to them from the action of Yahweh which they foretell. . . .

Consequently the greatness of a prophet is to be gathered from the measure in which he foresees the future."[1] This statement gives us the truth that lies between the two other extremes; for according to it the prophet proclaims and preaches religious truth, but he does so on the basis of what he perceives that God is about to do in the future. In other words, he proclaims new truth on the ground of the revelation God is about to make of Himself, which he is inspired to foresee and to interpret. His business is neither all foreseeing nor all teaching; it is teaching grounded upon foresight. Consequently it was impossible for the prophet to believe that change in religion was in itself evil. He *knew* to the contrary. Only change which should remove men from the Divinely given basis of the faith was evil; and such change, whatever credentials might accompany it, even though they might be miraculous, every faithful Israelite had been already warned most sternly to reject (Deut. xiii. 5). But when the impulse to advance came from Yahweh's manifestation of Himself, change was not only good, it was the indispensable test of faithfulness. They were not the true followers of Isaiah who, on the ground of his prophecy that Zion, as Yahweh's dwelling-place, should be delivered from destruction, rejected the prophecy of Jeremiah that Zion would fall before the Chaldeans. The really faithful men were those who had taken to heart the lessons Yahweh had set for His people in the century that lay between these two prophets; who saw that the time when the deliverance of Zion was necessary to the safety of the true religion was past, and that now the capture of Zion was necessary to its true development. And that is not a solitary case; it is an example of what was normal in the religious history of this people.

[1] *Lehrbuch der Alt-Testamentlichen Religion's Geschichte*, pp. 169 ff.

This did not escape the quick eye of John Stuart Mill. He says the religion of Israel "gave existence to an inestimably precious unorganised institution—the order (if it may be so termed) of prophets. . . . Religion, consequently, was not there, what it has been in so many other places, a consecration of all that was once established, and a barrier against further improvement." There always was the movement of pulsing life within it, and under the Divine guidance that movement was always upward. At some times it was comparatively shallow and slow, at others it was a deep and rushing tide. But it was always moving in directions which led straight to the great consummation of itself in the coming of Christ, who gathered up into His own life all the varied streams of revelation, and crowned and fulfilled them all. At no point in the progress from Moses to the Messiah do we touch rounded and completed truth; nor, according to the teaching of Scripture in this passage, were we meant to do so. The faithful among Israel had as their watchword the *disio* and *pace* of Dante. They saw before them a world of Divine "peace," which they knew lay still in the future, and the "desire" and yearning of their souls were always directed towards it. With inextinguishable hope they marched onward with uplifted faces, to which light reflected from that future gave at times a radiant gladness; and always they kept an open ear for those who saw what God was about to do at each turning of the way.

But granting that religion was thus progressive before men were spoken unto "by the Son," can we say or believe that, now that He has spoken, progress in this way is still possible? At first sight it would seem necessary to answer that question in the negative. The progressive revelation of God has come to its perfection in Jesus Christ: what then remains to us but to cling to

that? Are we not bound to make resistance to progress, to any new view in religion, our first duty? Many act and speak as if that were the only possible course consistent with faithfulness. But we must distinguish. The revelation of God has, according to our Christian faith, reached not only its highest actual point, but also its highest possible point in Christ. God can do nothing more for His vineyard than He has done. As a manifestation of God, revelation is completed and closed in Christ. For it is impossible to manifest God to men more fully than in a man who reveals God in every thought and word and act.

But it is quite otherwise with the interpretation of the manifestation. In the earlier days this was provided for by a special inspiration of God, which made the holy men of old infallible in their interpretation of the revelation received up to their day, and that continued till the establishment of the Church. Since then the Holy Spirit is to be the guide of faithful men into all truth. Now in the way of interpreting Christ and His message progress is as much open to us as it was to Israel. A complete revelation of God must necessarily, at any given time up till the consummation of all things, contain in it a residuum of significance which, at that point of their experience, mankind has not felt the need of, nor has had the capacity to understand. As the world grows older, however, new outlooks, new environments, new circumstances continually appear, and they all insist upon being dealt with by the Church. In order to deal with them adequately and worthily, a faithful Church must turn to Christ to see what God would have it do; and if Christ be what we take Him to be, there will issue from Him a light, unseen or unnoticed before, to meet the hitherto unfelt need. Moreover, while our Lord Jesus Christ reveals God completely as the God of Redemption,

and throws light upon all God's relations to man, a light which needs and admits of no supplementary addition, there are other aspects of the Divine character which He does not so entirely reveal. For example, God's relations to the world of nature, which are now being unveiled in a most striking manner, are dealt with comparatively rarely in the Gospels. Are we to shut our eyes to these as of no importance, and to allow them no influence upon our thoughts? Surely that cannot be demanded of us; for, to speak plainly, it is impossible. No one can remain unmoved when God and man are revealing themselves in the wondrous panorama of the world's life.

Even those who most profess to do so in no case take their stand simply and solely upon the truths believed and held by the first Christians. All of them have adopted later developments as part of their indefeasible treasure. Some go back to the theology of the great Evangelical Revival only; some to the Reformation; some to the pre-Reformation Scholastics; others to the first five centuries. But whatever the point may be at which they take up Christian theology, they take up, along with the original creed of the first believers, some truths or doctrines which emerged and were accepted at a later date. Themselves being judges, therefore, additions to the primitive deposit of faith have to be admitted; and it is a purely arbitrary proceeding on their part to say that now we have attained to all truth, and stolid conservatism is henceforth the only faithful attitude. No, we have still a living God and a living Church, and a multifarious and wonderful world to deal with. Interaction of these cannot be avoided, nor can it occur without new truth being evolved. To have ears and not to hear, to have eyes and not to see, must be as offensive to God now as it was in Old Testament times. Though we have now no inspired prophets to foresee and interpret, we have in all our Churches men whose ears

are better attuned to the celestial harmony than others, whose eyes have a keener and surer insight into what God the Lord would speak; and we ought to hear them, to see at least whether they can make their position good. To reject their teaching, only because some element or aspect of it is new, is to deny the guiding providence of God, to turn our back upon the rich stores of instruction which the facts of history, both secular and religious, are fitted to impart. That can never be a Christian duty. Even if it were possible it would be futile. The light will be received by the younger, the fresher and less stereotyped natures in all the Churches; and those who refuse it, in holding obstinately and with exclusive devotion to what they have, will find it shrink and shrivel in their hand. Only in the rush and conflict, only amid the impulses and the powers which are moving in the world, can a healthy religion breathe. Doubtless new teaching will come to *us* in ways congruous to the completed Revelation of our Redeeming God; but it will come; and it should be welcomed as gladly as the teaching of the prophets was welcomed by faithful men in Israel. If it be not, then the Divine threat will apply in this case as fully as in the other: "Whosoever will not hearken unto My words which he shall speak in My name, I will require it of him."

Many say now, and at all times many have said, to those who had caught glimpses of some new lesson God was desiring to teach: "You admit that souls have been renewed and character built up and spiritual life preserved without this new teaching. Why then can you not let us alone? In your pursuit of the best you may destroy the good; and no harm can happen if you keep the improved faith to yourself." But they have forgotten Yahweh's solemn "Whosoever will not hearken, I will require it of him." If we refuse to hear when the Lord hath spoken, evil must come of it. Indeed, though the evils of heresy

may be more dramatically and strikingly manifest, those of stagnation and a refusal to learn may be much more destructive of the common faith. For refusal to acknowledge truth has far wider issues than the loss of any particular truth. It indicates and reinforces an attitude of soul which, if persisted in, will allow the Church that adopts it to drift slowly away from living contact with the minds of men. So drifting, it shrinks into a *coterie*, and its every activity becomes infected with the curse of futility.

On both sides, therefore, there is danger for us, as there was for the Old Testament Church; and we turn with quickened interest to the test, the criterion, by which Deuteronomy would have the prophets tried. It puts the very question which the line of thought we have been pursuing could not fail to suggest: "How shall we know the word which Yahweh hath not spoken?" If a prophet spoke in the name of other gods he was to die; that had already been determined in the thirteenth chapter, and it is repeated here. But the prophet who should speak a word presumptuously in the name of Yahweh, which He had not commanded, was to be in the same condemnation. It was, therefore, of the last importance that there should be means of detecting when this last evil occurred. The test is this: "When a prophet speaketh in the name of Yahweh, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which Yahweh hath not spoken." The strange notions of Duhm and others in regard to this have been already dealt with (*vide* pp. 248 f.). There, too, it has been shown that the prophecy here spoken of must have been prophecy in its narrower sense, prophecy dealing with promises of *immediate* judgment and deliverance. Furthermore, this is set forth here as a test applicable to prophets in all ages of the history of Israel. It lies, too, in the nature of the case that it must always have been the popular test. The announcement of things to come before

they came was made, at least partially, with the view of impressing the populace, and of gaining their confidence and attention. They must consequently have been continually on the alert to apply this test, and all that is here done is to acknowledge it in the fullest manner as a right and Divinely approved criterion.

But the way in which it ought to be applied is best exemplified by Jeremiah's own method of applying it, which, as Dr. Edersheim[1] has pointed out, is to be found in the twenty-eighth chapter of that prophet's book. There we read of Jeremiah's conflict with "Hananiah the son of Azzur the prophet," in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah. Just previously Nebuchadnezzar had carried away Jeconiah the king of Judah, with all the treasures of the house of Yahweh and the strength of the people. Jeremiah had prophesied that they would not return; nay, he had foretold a further calamity, viz. that Nebuchadnezzar would come again and would take away the people and the vessels of the house which still remained. In opposition to that, Hananiah declared, as a word of Yahweh, "Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of Yahweh's house that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon; and I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah that went to Babylon, saith Yahweh." Jeremiah's conduct under these circumstances is noteworthy. He did not immediately denounce his rival as prophesying falsely. He seems to have thought that possibly he might have a true word from Yahweh, since, as we see in the Book of Jonah, the most positive prophecies were conditional, and Jeremiah would seem to have thought it possible that personal repentance was

[1] *Prophecy and History in Relation to the Messiah*, p. 150.

about to bring upon the captive king and people a blessing, instead of the evil he had foreseen. He consequently expressed a fervent wish that Hananiah's prophecy might come true, but reminded his rival that the causes of the evil prophecies of himself and previous prophets were far wider than the ground which the personal repentance of the captives could cover. Because of that he evidently felt the gravest doubt about Hananiah; but he disposes of the matter by saying, "The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that Yahweh hath truly sent him." Only afterwards, when he had himself received a special revelation concerning Hananiah, did he denounce him as an impostor and a false prophet.

The whole narrative is of extreme importance, for it shows us how the prophets themselves regarded their own supernatural powers, and how they used the tests supplied in Deuteronomy. In the first place, they asked how the new word of Yahweh stood in regard to the older words which He had certainly spoken. If there was any possible way in which the new and the old could be reconciled, they gave the new the benefit of the doubt, and left the decision to the event. Obviously had there been no way of reconciling Hananiah's prophecy with the mass of contrary prophecy which had gone before, Jeremiah would have denounced him under the law of Deut. xiii. 5 as leading away from Yahweh. As it was, he fell back upon the test in this twenty-eighth chapter, and would have maintained an attitude of watchful neutrality until the event had justified or condemned his rival, had not Yahweh Himself settled the question.

For our own day and in our different circumstances the tests are radically the same, though, as prophecy is extinct in the Church, they must to some extent act differently. The New Testament parallel to the criterion

in Deut. xiii. 5 is to be found in 1 John iv. 1, 2, and 3: "Prove the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit which confesseth not Jesus is not of God: and this is the spirit of the antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it cometh." Under the Christian dispensation to deny "that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" is the same as it was to say under the earlier dispensation "Let us go after other gods," so completely do God and Christ coincide in our most holy faith. In each case the ultimate test of prophecy is to be the fundamental principle of the faith. Whatever credentials teachers who deny that may bring, they are to be unhesitatingly rejected. They belong to the world, that scheme and fabric of things which rejects allegiance to the Spirit of God. Least of all is popularity with the world as distinguished from the Church, or with the worldly portion of the Church, to stand in the way of its rejection. That is only the natural consequence of its being "of the world." Within the Church no quarter is to be shown to such teaching, for it really carries with it the absolute negation of the faith.

But what of erroneous teaching which acknowledges that "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh"? To it the Old Testament parallel is the utterance of the prophet who "speaketh in the name of Yahweh, and the thing followeth not nor comes to pass." According to Old Testament precept and example, that was to be left to the judgment of time. In our day a corresponding course must be found. The case suppósed is that of teaching believed to be erroneous, but neither fundamentally subversive of Christianity nor destructive of the special principles of a Church. If so, earnest opposition by those who hold the

opposite view, and adequate discussion, are the true way of meeting the case. For the rest, the final decision should be left to experience. In time, even subsidiary error of this kind, if important, will manifest itself by weakening spiritual life in those who hold it; they will gradually dwindle in numbers and their influence in the Church will die away. They begin by promising renewed strength and insight in spiritual things, renewed energy in the spiritual life. If that "follow not nor come to pass," when due time has been given for any such development, then that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, and it should be dealt with as the fundamental heresy is to be dealt with. But probably by that time it will have judged itself, and will need no judgment of men at all.

These then were the connecting links between Yahweh and His people, and the organs by which the life of the Israelite nation was guided: the Kingship, the Priesthood, and the Prophetic Order. The first gave visibility to the Divine rule, and stability to national and social life; the second secured the stability of religion, and built up the moral life of the nation on the basis of Mosaic law; the third secured progress and averted stagnation, both in religion and in social and individual morals. In fact, order and progress, the two things Positivist thinkers have set forth as those which can alone secure health to a community, are provided for here with a directness and success which it would be difficult to parallel elsewhere. When we remember how small, how obscure, and how uncivilised the people was to whom this scheme of things was given, and how little their surroundings or circumstances were calculated to suggest such far-reaching provisions, we see that the source of it all was the Revelation of the Divine character given by Moses. Yahweh as revealed through him did not permit His worshippers to believe that they could, at one moment, receive all that was to be known about

Him. They were taught to found their conduct and their polity upon what they did know, and to be eagerly on the watch for that which might be revealed at new crises of their history. Now that teaching finds its most complete expression in the laws concerning the three institutions we have been reviewing. Behind all healthy national life and all stable institutions there was, so had this people learned, the power and the righteousness of Almighty God. In His eagerness to draw near to men, He had changed the priest, the king, the prophet from being, as they were among the heathen, merely political and religious officials appointed for purely earthly ends, into channels of communication with Him. Through them there were poured into the life of this nation wholesome and varied streams of Divine grace and enlightenment, and a just balance between conservatism and reform in religion was admirably secured. Consequently, amid all drawbacks, the Israelites became an instrument of the finest power for good in the hands of their Almighty King; and even when their outward glory faded, they were inwardly renewed and pressed onward age after age. "Without hasting and without resting," the purpose of God was realised in their history, guided by these three organs of their national life. Each contributed its share in preparing for the fulness of the time when He came who was the Salvation of God, and each supplied elements of the most essential kind to the mingled expectation which was so marvellously satisfied by the life and work of Christ. They wrought together in the fullest harmony, moreover, though they were not always conscious of doing so. For they all moved at the bidding of the still small voice wherewith God speaks most effectively to the souls of men. Because of this their purposes took a wider sweep than they knew, their hopes received wings which carried them far away beyond the horizon of Old Testament time; and,

starting from the remotest points, all the streams of the national life converged, till, at the close of the Old Testament time, they were running in such directions that they could not fail in little space to meet. It was therefore no surprise to the faithful in Israel when, at the beginning of the New Testament, they were found to have met in Jesus the Christ. Once that point was reached, the whole former history, which was now lying completed before the eyes of all, could be fully appreciated. Everything in the past seemed to speak of Him. If, in that first burst of joyous surprise, Messianic references of the most definite kind were found where we now can see only faint hints and adumbrations, we need not wonder. So much more had been spoken of Him than they had thought, it would have been strange had they not swung a little to the opposite extreme. But that need not hinder us from acknowledging that the history of Israel, viewed from their standpoint, was and is the most conspicuous, the most convincing, the most inspiring proof of the Divine action in the world. The finger of God was so manifestly *here*, harmonising, directing, impelling, that the evidence for Divine guidance in much more obscure regions becomes irresistible. With this history before us we can believe that it was not only in those far-off days, and in that little corner of Asia that God was active for the production of good. Now and here, as well as then and there, there are Divine and guiding forces at work in the world; and the only safe politics, the only truly prosperous peoples, are those in which rulers and priests and prophets are secured, to whom the secret of God is open.

CHAPTER XX

THE ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF ISRAELITE LIFE

IT has often and justly been said that the life of Israel is so entirely founded on the grace and favour of God that no distinction is made between the secular and the religious laws. Whatever their origin may have been, whether they had been part of the tribal constitution before Moses' day or not, they were all regarded as Divinely given. They had been accepted as fit building stones for the great edifice of that national life in which God was to reveal Himself to all mankind, and behind them all was the same Divine authority. That being so, it is not wonderful, in times like these, when the air is full of plans and theories for the reconstruction of society in the interest of the toiling masses of men, that believers in the Scriptures should turn with hope to the legislation of the Old Testament. In the present state of things the material conditions of life are far more deadening and demoralising for the multitude in civilised countries than they are in many uncivilised lands. That this should be so is intolerable to all who think and feel; and men turn with hope to a scene where God is teaching and training men, not merely in regard to their individual life, as in the New Testament, but also in regard to national life. It is seen, too, that the tone and feeling of these laws are sympathetic for the poor as no other code has ever been; and many maintain that, if we would only return to the provisions of these laws, the social crisis which is as yet only in its

beginning, and which threatens to darken and overshadow all lands, would be at once and wholly averted. Men consequently are diligently inquiring what the land tenure of ancient Israel was, what its trade laws were, how the poor were dealt with, and how and to what extent pauperism was averted or provided for. Many say, If God has spoken in and by this people, so that their first steps in religion and morals have been the starting-point for the highest life of humanity, may we not expect that their first steps in political and social life will have the same abiding value, if rightly understood? Now the main thing in regard to which the economical arrangements of a nation are important is land. In modern times there may be some exceptionally situated communities, such as the British people, among whom commerce and manufactures are more important than agriculture; but in ancient times no such case could arise. In every community the land and the land tenure were the fundamentally important things.

Now the fundamental thing concerning it was that Yahweh, being the King of Israel, who had formed and was guiding this people as His instrument for saving the world, and who had bestowed their country upon them, was regarded as the sole owner of the soil. It is not necessary to quote texts to prove this, since it is the fundamental assumption throughout the Old Testament Scriptures that the Israelite title to their land was the gift of Yahweh. He had promised it to the fathers. He had driven out the Canaanite nations before Israel. He had by His mighty hand and His stretched-out arm established His chosen people in the place which He had chosen, and He had granted them the use and enjoymen of it so long as they proved faithful to Him. Consequently, in a quite real and palpable sense, there was no owner of land in Israel save Yahweh. And this thought was not

without practical consequences of great moment. It was not a mere religious sentiment, it was a hard and palpable fact, that Yahweh ruled. Absolute proprietorship could never be built up on that basis, and never as a matter of fact, was acknowledged in Israel. All were tenants, who held their places only so long as they obeyed the statutes of Yahweh. The sale in perpetuity of that which had been portioned out to tribes and families was consequently entirely prohibited. As against other nations, indeed, Israel was to possess this land, so that no heathen could be permitted to buy and possess even a scrap of it; but as against Yahweh and the purposes for which He had chosen Israel, all were equally strangers and sojourners, practically tenants at will, who could neither give nor take their holdings as if they were absolutely theirs. Yet, relatively, the land was given to the community as a whole, and according to Joshua xiii. 7 sqq. (a passage generally assigned to the Deuteronomic editor) it was parcelled out by lot to the various tribes just before Joshua's death, according to their respective numbers.[1] Then within the tribal domain the families in the wider sense had their portion, and within these family domains again the individual households. In this way the Israelite tenure of land occupies a middle point between the theories of Socialism, and the high doctrine of private property in land which declares that the individual owner can do what he will with his own. The nation as a whole claimed rights over all the land, but it did not attempt to manage the public estate for the common good. It delegated its powers to the tribes. But not even they undertook the burdens of proprietorship. Under them the families undertook a general superintendence; but the true proprietary rights, the cultivation of the soil, and the drawing of profit from it, subject only to deductions made

[1] Cf Numb. xxvi. 53-55 from P and Josh. xvii. 14 ff. from JE.

by the larger bodies, the families, the tribes, and the nation, were exercised only by individuals. The nation took care that none of its territory should be sold to foreigners, lest the national inheritance should be diminished, and the tribes did the same for the tribal heritage, as we see from the narrative concerning the daughters of Zelophehad. It was only within limits therefore, that the individual proprietor was free; and though the rights of property were respected, the corresponding duties of property were set forth with irresistible clearness. The community, in fact, never abandoned its claims upon the common heritage, any more than Israel's Divine King did, and consequently the field within which proprietary rights were exercised was more restricted here than in any modern state.

Further, besides the prohibition of absolute sale which flowed from the recognition of Yahweh's ownership, and the limitations which tribal and family claims involved, there were distinct provisions in which the national ownership under Yahweh was plainly asserted. For example, it is enacted in Deut. xxiii. 24—"When thou comest into thy neighbour's vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes thy fill at thine own pleasure; but thou shalt not put any in thy vessel. When thou comest into thy neighbour's standing corn, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour's standing corn." Allied to these were the provisions (Lev. xix. 9ff., xxiii. 10) concerning gleaning, and not reaping the corners of the field. It will be observed that, though these latter may be discounted as intended for the relief of the poor alone, the former provision was for all, and that consequently it may be regarded as an undoubted assertion of the common ownership, or common *usufruct*, which, though latent, was always held to be a fact. In other ways also the same hint is

given. The provisions for letting the land lie fallow in the seventh year and in the jubilee year, and for securing the use of what grew in the field for all who chose to take it, were interferences with the free-will of the individual owners or occupiers, which find their justification only in the fact that the general ownership was never suffered entirely to fall into the background.

To sum up then this system aimed at securing the advantages both of the socialist view and of the individualistic view, while avoiding the evils of both. Private enterprise was encouraged, by the individual being guaranteed possession of his land against any other individual; while public spirit and a regard for general interests were promoted by the restrictions which limited the private ownership. Further, and more important still, the whole relation of the nation and of the individual to the land was raised out of the merely sordid region of material gain into the spiritual and moral region, by the principle that Yahweh their God alone had full proprietary rights over the soil. All were "sojourners" with Him. He had promised this land to their fathers as the place wherein He should specially reveal Himself to them. Here, communion with Him was to be established, and to each household there had been assigned by Yahweh a special portion of it, which it would be equally a sin and an unspeakable loss to part with. Compulsion alone could justify such a surrender; and the completed legislation, whatever its date, and even if it remained always an unrealised ideal, shows how determined the effort was to secure the perpetuity of the tenure in the original hands. The ideal of Israelite life was consequently that the land should remain in the hands of the hereditary owners, and that the main support of all the people should be agricultural labour.[1]

[1] The questions connected with the jubilee year are numerous and

The hypothesis that this was the case is strengthened to a certainty by the manner in which commerce, one of the other main sources of wealth, is dealt with in the Israelite law. There is but little sympathy expressed with it, and some of the regulations issued are such as to render trade on any very large scale within Palestine itself impossible. From the use of the word "Canaanite" in the Old Testament (cf. Job xli. 6; Prov. xxxi. 24; Zeph. i. 11; Ezek. xvii. 4, and Isa. xxiii. 8) it is clear that, even in the later periods of Israelite history, the merchants were so prevailingly Canaanites that the two words are synonymous. Nay, more; there can be no doubt that the commercial career was looked down upon. Even as early as the prophet Hosea the Canaanite name is connected with false weights and vulgar commercial cheating (Hos. xii. 7), and it is looked upon as a last degradation that Ephraim should take delight in similar pursuits. In all that we read of merchants in the Old Testament we seem

intricate, and it may be for ever impossible, from lack of data, to decide at what period in Israelite history it originated, or whether it was ever actually observed; but it undoubtedly expressed the spirit of the Israelite legislation and customary law at all times. It is the natural culmination of tendencies and ideas which were always present. That it is not mentioned in Deuteronomy at all is surprising, if it had been previously to Manasseh's day embodied either in custom or in law; yet, on the other hand, there are references in Ezekiel and other exilic books which are almost unintelligible except on the supposition that the jubilee year was a perfectly well-known institution (cf. Jer. xxxiv. 8 ff.; Ezek. vii. 12 f.; Ezek. xlvi. 16 ff.; Isa. lxi. 1 ff.). It is referred to in a merely allusive way, which implies that every hearer or reader of the prophetic warnings would know at once the full scope and meaning of the reference. Now, had the jubilee year been unknown before the Exile, had it been introduced by the author of Lev. xxv. just before Ezekiel, no such assumption could have been made. It would, therefore, seem necessary to suppose that the ordinance for a jubilee year must have existed in pre-exilic time; for, strange as Deuteronomy's silence in regard to it is, the *argumentum e silentio* cannot weigh against indications of a positive kind, were they even fainter than those we have in regard to this matter.

to hear the expression of a feeling that commerce, with its necessary wanderings, its temptations to dishonesty, its constant contact with heathen peoples, was an occupation that was unworthy of a son of Israel. Even Solomon's success as a royal merchant would not seem to have overcome this feeling, nor did the later commercial successes of kings like Jehoshaphat. In fact the ordinary Israelite had the home-staying farmer's contempt and suspicion of these far-wandering commercial people, so much more nimble-witted than himself, who were therefore to be regarded with half-admiring wariness.

But the very sinews of extensive commerce were cut by the law against the taking of interest from a brother Israelite.[1] Without credit, or the lending of money, or what is called sleeping partnership (and all these are bound up with receiving interest), it is impossible to have extensive trade. Without them every merchant would have to limit his operations to cash transactions and to his own immediate capital, and the great combinations which especially bring wealth would be impossible. Now we do not need at present to discuss the wisdom of prohibiting the taking of interest, nor the still more debated question whether that ancient prohibition would be wise or advantageous now. It is enough for our purpose that usury in its literal sense was actually forbidden among Israelites, and that they were thus shut out from the developed commercial life of the surrounding nations. As a result trade remained in a merely embryonic condition.

But in still other ways the Sinaitic legislation interfered with its development. The inculcation of ceremonial purity, especially in food, and the effort to make Israel a peculiar people unto Yahweh, which distinguishes even

[1] Cf. Kübel, *Die sociale und wirthschaftliche Gesetzgebung des Alten Testaments* p. 47.

the earlier forms of the law, made intercourse with foreigners and living abroad, always difficult, and under some circumstances impossible. Consequently all the legislation that can possibly be considered commercial was of a very rudimentary character. From every point of view it is clear that ancient Israel was not a commercial people, and that the Divine law was intended to restrain them from commercial pursuits. They could not have been the holy and peculiar people they were meant to be, had they become a nation of traffickers.

With regard to manufacturing industries the case was not essentially different. Such pursuits were, it is true, more honoured than commerce was, for skill in all arts, whether agricultural or industrial, was regarded as a special gift of the Almighty. But so far as the records go, there is no evidence that a manufacturing industry existed, beyond what the very limited needs of the nation itself demanded. From the fact that, according to Prov. xxxi. 24, which was probably written late in the history of Israel, the manufacturing of linen garments for sale and of girdles for the Canaanites was the business of the thrifty and virtuous housewife, we may gather that systematic wholesale manufacture of such things was unknown. Probably the case was not otherwise in regard to all branches of industry. There are no traces of trade castes, nor of manufacturing towns; so that the manufacturing industries, so far as they existed, had no other place than that of handmaids to agriculture, by which the nation really lived.

According to the Old Testament, then, the ideal state of things for a people like Israel was that every household should be settled upon the land, that permanent eviction from or even alienation of the holdings should be impossible, and that the whole population should have a common interest in agriculture, that most honourable

and fundamental of all human pursuits. There were, of course, some men in Israel more prominent than others, and some richer, but there was to be no impassable barrier between classes such as we find in Eastern countries where caste prevails, or in Western countries where the aristocratic principle has drawn a deep dividing line between those of "good" blood and all others. So far as is known, there were no class barriers to intermarriage. From the highest to the lowest, all were servants of Yahweh, and were consequently equal. The conditions of the land tenure were such that it was impossible, if they were respected, that large estates should accumulate in the hands of individuals, and a landless proletariate could not arise. The very rich and the very poor were alike legislated out of existence, and a sufficient provision for all was that which was aimed at. By the cycle of Sabbatic periods (the weekly Sabbath, the Sabbatic year, and the year of jubilee) ample rest for the land and its inhabitants was secured; and in the limits set upon the period for which a Hebrew slave might be retained, in the release, whatever that was, which the seventh year brought to the debtor, and in the restoration of land to the impoverished owner in the year of jubilee, such a series of breakwaters were erected against the inrushing flood of pauperism, that, had they been maintained, the world would have seen for the first time a fairly civilised community in which even moderate ill-desert in a man could not bring irretrievable ruin upon his posterity. The prodigal was hindered from selling his heritage; he could only sell the use of it for a number of years. He could not ruin himself by borrowing at extravagant rates of interest, for no one was tempted to lend him, and usury was forbidden. He might indeed run into debt and be sold into slavery along with his family, but that could only be for a few years, and then they all resumed their

former position. In this very land where the fact, Divinely impressed upon human life, that the sins of the fathers were visited on the children was most unflinchingly taught, the most elaborate precautions were taken to mitigate the severity of this necessary law. From the first the ideal was that there should be no son or daughter of Israel oppressed or impoverished permanently; and whatever the stages of advance in Israelite law may have been, and whatever the date of particular ordinances may be, there is an admirable consistency of aim throughout. Even should it be proved that the Sabbatic ordinances remained mere generous aspirations, which never entered into the practical life of the people at all, that fact would only emphasise the earnestness and persistency with which the inspired legislators pursued their generous aim. No change in circumstances turned them aside. The glitter of the wealth acquired by Solomon and other kings by commerce never seduced them. No ideal but that early one of every man sitting under his own vine and his own fig-tree, with none to make him afraid, which is witnessed to before the Exile (Micah iv. 4), in the Exile (1 Kings iv. 25), and after the Exile (Zech. iii. 10), was ever cherished by them; and the whole economic legislation is entirely consistent with what we know of the earliest time. And the deepest roots of it all were religious. The Biblical writers have no doubt at all that the ideal economic state can be reached only by a people attuned by religion to self-sacrifice, to pity, and to justice. In this they differ radically from the socialists or semi-socialists of to-day. These imagine that man needs only a favourable environment to become good; whereas the Scriptural writers know that to use well the best environment is a task which, more than anything, puts strain upon the moral and spiritual nature. For to

deal in a supremely wise fashion with great opportunities is the part only of a nature perfectly moralised. Consequently all the social laws of Israel are made to have their root in the relation of the people to their God.

There was only one power that could secure that this admirable machinery would move, and keep it moving. That was the love and fear of God. The conduct prescribed was the conduct befitting the *true* Israelite, the man who was faithful in all his ways. The laws marked out the paths wherein he should walk if he willed to do God's will. They were, therefore, ideal in all their highest prescriptions, and could never become real except where the true religion had had its perfect work. In that respect the Sermon on the Mount resembles the Israelite law. It presupposes a completely Christian society, just as the old law presupposes a completely Yahwistic society, *i.e.* a society made up of men who made devotion to their God the chief motive of their lives. In such a community there would have been no difficulty in entirely realising the state of things aimed at here, just as in a community penetrated by the love of Christ the Sermon on the Mount would be not only practicable but natural. But without that supreme motive much that the enactments of both the Old Testament and the New demand must remain mere aspiration. Just in proportion as Israel was true to Yahweh was the law realised, and the demands of the law always acted as a spur to the better part of the people to enter into fuller sympathy and communion with Him in order that they might respond to them. The law and the religion of the people acted and reacted upon one another, but the greater of these two elements was religion.

It was not wonderful, therefore, that to a large extent his legislation failed, as men measure failure. The religious state of the nation never was what it should have

been; and the law, though it was held to be Divine, was never wholly observed. In the Northern Kingdom, by the time of the Syrian wars, the old constitution of Israel had broken up. The hardy yeomanry had been ruined and dispersed. Their lands had been seized or bought by the rich, and every law that had been made to ensure restoration was habitually disregarded. As Robertson Smith states it,[1]: "The unhappy Syrian wars sapped the strength of the country, and gradually destroyed the old peasant proprietors who were the best hope of the nation. The gap between the many poor and the few rich became wider and wider. The landless classes were ground down by usury and oppression, for in that state of society the landless man had no career in trade, and was at the mercy of the landholding capitalist." And in Judah the state of things, though not so bad, was similar. In the days of Zedekiah we know that Hebrew slaves were held for life, instead of being released in the seventh year.[2] The properties of those compelled to sell were never returned to the owners, and all the laws that were meant to secure the welfare and prosperity of the masses of Israel were contemptuously disregarded. In short, the worst features of a purely competitive civilisation, with materialism eating into its soul, became glaringly manifest. All the canonical prophets without exception denounce the vices and tyrannies of the rich.[3] As far as can be learned, moreover, the year of release and the Sabbatic year were not regularly or generally observed, while the jubilee year would seem never to have been kept after the Exile. The laws regarding taking interest were also evaded.[4]

Nevertheless it would be a great error to suppose that these Divinely given social laws should be branded as a

[1] *Prophets of Israel*, p. 88.
[2] Cf. Jer. xxxiv. 8 ff.
[3] Cf. Amos ii. 6 ff.
[4] Neh. v. 1 seq.

failure. They were not lived up to, and it is not improbable that the corruption of the people's life was in a degree intensified by the reaction from so high an ideal. But the axiom which is current now in all the newspapers, that laws too far above the general level of the national conscience cannot be enforced, and becoming a dead letter tend to produce lawlessness, does not apply to such codes as those of Israel. These, as has more than once been pointed out, were not of the same character as our legal codes are. Among us, laws are meant to be observed with minute and careful diligence, and any breach of them is punished by the courts, which, on the whole, can be easily set in motion. Ancient religious codes are never of that kind. They do contain laws of that character, but the bulk of the provisions are not laws which the executive is to enforce, but ideals of conduct which the true worshipper of God ought to strive to attain to. It is, therefore, of their very essence that they should be far above the average national conscience. Nations whose ideals soar no higher than the possible attainment of the average man as he is, have virtually no ideals at all, and are cut off from all enduring upward impulses. Those, on the contrary, who have a vision of the perfect life, are certain to be both humbler, and at the same time more sure to persist in the painful path of moral discipline. As "a man's reach should exceed his grasp," so also should a nation's; and though it is almost always forgotten, it is precisely Israel's glory that she set up for herself and exhibited to the world an ideal of brotherhood, of love to God and man, to which she could not attain. Great as the practical failure in Israel was, therefore, no fault can be found in the legislation. It moulded the characters of men who were sensitive to the influences coming from God, so that they became fit instruments of inspiration; and it made their lives examples of the highest

virtue that the ancient world knew. Further, it gave shape to the hopes and aspirations of the people, especially where it was not realised. The year of jubilee, for example, is the groundwork of that great and affecting promise contained in Isa. lxi: "The Spirit of the Lord Yahweh is upon me, because Yahweh hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty (*deror*) to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of Yahweh and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn." That which was unattainable here, amid the greeds and lusts of an unspiritual generation, gave colour to the Messianic future; and men were taught to look and wait for a kingdom of God in which a peace and truth that could not as yet be reached would be the certain possession of all.

When we turn to modern times and modern circumstances, it is not easy to see how this ancient law can be applicable to them. In the first place, much of it was made binding upon Israel only because of its peculiar character as the people to whom the true religion was revealed. As custodians of that, they were justified in keeping up walls of partition between themselves and the world, which if universally accepted would only be hurtful to the highest interests of mankind. On the contrary, the development of the true religion having been completed by the coming of Christ, it is the duty of those nations which enjoy the light to spread abroad the "good news" of God which they have received, and to exhibit its power among all the nations of the earth. The highest and most Divine call which can now come to any people must, therefore, be radically different in some chief aspects from that of Israel. In the second place, the civilisation and culture of the great nations of to-day are far more

complicated than any ancient civilisation ever was, and the general level is fixed by an action and reaction extending over the whole civilised world. No successes can be achieved, no blunders can be committed, in any part of the world which do not affect almost immediately the farthest ends of the earth. Moreover the intimate and universal correlation of interest makes interference with any part of the complicated whole an exceedingly perilous matter. Any proposal that this law, as being Divinely given, ought in its economic aspect to be made universally binding, should therefore be met by a demand for a careful inquiry into possible differences between ancient life and modern, which might make guidance Divinely given to the one inapplicable to the other. It is not necessarily true that because Israel by Divine command established every household upon the soil, forbade interest, and did nothing to encourage trade and manufactures, we should do these things. Take, for instance, the case of interest. In our day, and in civilisations of a high type, lending money to a person not in distress at all, but who sees an opportunity of making enough by the use of borrowed money to pay the interest and make a profit, is often a most praiseworthy and charitable act.

But if the Israelite legislation in regard to interest cannot justly be taken as a law for all time, still less can any great modern state neglect or discourage commerce and manufactures. The merely embryonic character of commercial legislation, and the contempt for the merchant which did in ancient days exist, would be exceedingly out of place now. There is no career more honourable than that of the merchant of our day when he carries on his business in a high-minded fashion, nor is there any member of the community whose calling is more beneficent than his. So long as he looks for gain to himself in ways which,

taken on the great scale, bring benefit both to producer and consumer, his activity is purely beneficial. There is absolutely no reason why commercial life should not be as honest, as sound, as much in accord with the mind of God, in itself, as any other manner of life. For in many ways it has been a civilising agent of the highest power. Of course, if the charges brought against merchants by Ruskin, for example, who seizes upon and believes every story which involves charges of fraud against modern commerce, were true; if it were impossible, as he says it is, for an honest man to prosper in trade, then we might have some ground for condemning this branch of human activity. But happily only a confirmed and incorrigible pessimist can believe that. In our time some of the noblest men of whom we have any knowledge have been merchants, and among no class has so much princely generosity been exhibited. If mercantile help had been withdrawn from the poor, if the time, the money, the organising skill which merchants have freely expended upon charities were suddenly to fail them, the case against our modern civilisation would be indefinitely stronger than it is. Moreover the immense expansion of credit which is at once the glory and the danger of modern commerce, is itself a proof that such wholesale condemnation as we have spoken of is unwarrantable. The bulk of commerce must, after all, be fairly sound, otherwise it could not continue and spread as it does. And, as against the evils which affect it in common with all human activities, we must put the fact that it brings the produce of all lands to the door even of the poor, and by the constant contact between nations which it causes it is influencing the thought as well as the lives of men. Human brotherhood is being furthered by it, slowly, it is true, but surely, and the barriers which separate the nations are being sapped by its influence. These are indispensable services for the

future progress of mankind, and make commerce now as much the necessary handmaid of the highest life as it would have been a hindrance to it in the case of the chosen people, before they had assimilated the truths of which they were to be the bearers to the world. That commerce, and trade in general, need to be purified goes without saying. That it may, of late years, have deteriorated, as the general decay of faith and the pursuit of luxury have weakened the sanctions of morality, is not improbable. But in itself it is not only a legitimate human activity; it is also an admirable instrument for bringing home to the consciences of men the truth that they are all their brothers' keepers. It presses home as nothing else could do the great truth proclaimed by St. Paul in regard to the Church, as true also of the world, that if one member suffers all the body suffers with it. Every day through this channel men are receiving lessons, which they cannot choose but hear, to the effect that no permanent benefit can come from the loss and suffering of men in any part of the world; that peace and righteousness and good faith are things which have supreme value even in the mercantile sense; and that, conversely, the merchant's pursuit of wealth, if carried on in accord with the fundamental truths of morality, inevitably becomes a potent factor in that advance to a worldwide knowledge of the Lord, which gleamed before the eyes of prophets and seers as the

> "Far-off Divine event,
> To which the whole creation moves."

But if we cannot make the Old Testament our law in regard to commerce, we must ask whether the legislation in regard to land has for us any binding force? Viewing it with this question in our minds, I think we must be struck by one fact, this namely, that the universal possession of land which was provided for in Israel and

so anxiously maintained is the only provision known against the growth of a wage-earning class largely, if not entirely, at the mercy of the employer. In Greece and Rome the population at first were all settled on their own lands, and it was only when by money-lending the small properties were bought up and turned into huge farms, worked by farm-bailiffs and slaves, that misery began to invade all parts of the social fabric. In mediæval and feudal England, on the other hand, and indeed wherever the feudal system existed, the cultivators, even when they were serfs, had an inalienable right to the land. They could not be evicted if they rendered certain not very burdensome services to the lord. "As long as these dues were satisfied, it is plain the tenant was secure from dispossession," says Professor Thorold Rogers (*Six Centuries*, etc., p. 44). But in time that system was broken down; and ever since, until within the last half-century, the course of things with the labouring classes in England has been one long descent. So long as the people were attached to the soil, and so long as all alike practised agriculture, as in Palestine under the Mosaic law, Englishmen lived in rough plenty, and were for the most part content. The fifteenth century was the golden age of mediæval agriculture; but a change for the worse came in with the seventeenth, and it continued.[1]

Two measures—the introduction of competitive rents with its corollary, eviction, and the enclosure of the common lands—worked gradually on until they have entirely divorced the workman from the soil, and Professor Cairnes[2] has told us clearly what that means. "In a contest between vast bodies of people so circumstanced and the owners of the soil the negotiation could have but one issue, that of transferring to the owners of

[1] *Contemp. Rev.*, 1880, April, p. 681.
[2] *Essays on Political Economy*, p. 201.

the soil the whole produce, *minus* what was sufficient to maintain in the lowest state of existence the race of cultivators. This is what has happened wherever the owners of the soil, discarding all considerations but those dictated by self-interest, have really availed themselves of the full strength of their position. It is what has happened under rapacious governments in Asia; it is what has happened under rapacious landlords in Ireland; it is what now happens under the bourgeois proprietors of Flanders; it is, in short, the inevitable result which cannot but happen in the great majority of all societies now existing on earth where land is given up to be dealt with on commercial principles unqualified by public opinion, custom, or law." The result is that the labourers have only their daily wages to depend upon. "They have no means of productive home industry; they have not even a home from which they cannot be ejected at any moment on failure to pay the weekly rent; they have no land, garden, or domestic animals, the produce of which might support them till fresh work could be obtained."[1] We need not wonder that this question of the occupancy of land as the only visible remedy for the hideous social state of the most highly civilised nations of the world is gradually becoming *the* question of our time. A great reaction against the purely commercial theory of land tenure has taken place. The land legislation in Ireland has been based on the doctrines that the nation cannot permit absolute property in land, and that there is no hope for any permanent improvement in the condition of the poor until labourers have land of their own. Now these are precisely the principles of the Scriptural land legislation. Under it landlords with absolute rights over land were impossible, and the rise of a proletariate at the

[1] Wallace, *Land Nationalisation*, p. 16.

mercy of the capitalist was also impossible. It is not so strange, therefore, as it might at first sight appear that the demands of advanced land reformers, as they are voiced in Mr. Wallace's book (p. 192), are, *mutatis mutandis*, identical with the provisions of the Israelite law. He demands (1) that landlordism shall be superseded by occupying ownership; (2) that the tenure of the holders of land must be made secure and permanent; (3) that arrangements must be made by which every British subject may secure a portion of land for personal occupation at its fair agricultural value; and (4) that in order that these conditions be rendered permanent sub-letting must be absolutely prohibited, and mortgages strictly limited. This essential oneness of view in the modern land reformer and in the ancient law is all the more remarkable that, so far as can be gathered from his book, Mr. Wallace has never regarded the Old Testament from this point of view. He never quotes it, and is apparently quite unconscious that the plan which experience of present evils, and acute and disinterested reflection on them, has suggested to him, was set forth thousands of years ago as the only righteous one.

But this is not by any means the end of the matter. Even if the social reformers of our day could restore society to the conditions set forth so emphatically and so long ago in Israel, history proves that nothing more than a temporary improvement might be accomplished. In Israel, as we have seen, with the decay of religion came the decay of this righteous social state. Human selfishness then shook off the curb of religion, and gave itself without restraint to the oppression of the poor. Have we any reason to believe that now human selfishness would do less? There appears little ground to think so; and though we may believe that without the acceptance of Deuteronomic principles in modern life

we cannot restrain the growth of poverty, even with Deuteronomic principles embodied in our laws nothing will be done if the people turn their backs upon religion, make selfish enjoyment their highest good, and the comforts and pleasures of a merely material life their only heart-warming aspiration. In that fact we have an indication of the true functions of the Church and of religious teachers in the social and political life of our time and of times to come. As individuals, religious men should certainly be found always among the advocates of all laws and plans which tend to justice and mercy, and to the raising of the toilers everywhere to a higher standard of living. Further, at no time should the Church be found committed to a purely conservative policy, of retaining things as they are. The undeniable facts as to the condition of the poor are so utterly unjustifiable, that to leave things as they are is to fall into the treason of despair in regard to the future of our race, and into scarcely veiled disbelief of the essential truth of Christianity. No Church whose heart has not been corrupted by worldliness can think for a moment that the present state of things in all highly civilised communities is even tolerable. It cannot last, and it ought not to last; the Church that timidly supports it, lest worst things should come, is named and known thereby for recreant to Christ and to the highest hopes of His Gospel. But, on the other hand, it is only in very exceptional circumstances, and for short intervals, that the Churches and their ministers can ever be called upon to make the external, material condition of the people their first and chief care. They have a place of their own to fill, a function of their own to discharge; and upon their efficiency and diligence in these the stability and permanence of all that politicians and publicists can accomplish ultimately depends. They must keep alive and nourish the religious life, as that life

has been shaped and constituted by our Lord Jesus Christ. Their province is to witness, in season and out of season, for a life of purity and love, for the Divine and ideal sides of things, for the necessity, for man's highest well-being, of a life hid with Christ in God. If they do not keep up this testimony, no others will; and if it be dropped out of sight, then the social agony and struggle, the patriotic and humanitarian strivings of all the reformers, will lack their final sanction. Men will inevitably come to think that man's life does consist in the abundance of the things that he possesses, the leisure, the amusement, the culture which by combining material resources he may attain to. But it is to deny and denounce that view that the Church exists in the world. It was to lift men out of it, to set them above it for ever, that Christ died. It is finally only by abandoning it that the highest social condition can be reached and made permanent for the multitudes of men. In no way therefore can the Church so dangerously betray the cause of the poor and the oppressed as by plunging into the heat of the social and political struggle. She has to witness to higher things than that involves, and her silence in the ideal region which would certainly follow her devotion to material interests, however unselfish, would be but ill compensated for by any imaginable success she might attain.

CHAPTER XXI

JUSTICE IN ISRAEL

AMONG the nations of the modern world one of the most vital distinctions is the degree in which just judgment is estimated and provided for. Indeed, according to modern ideas, life is tolerable only where all men are equal before the law; where all are judged by statutes which are known, or at least may be known, by all; where corruption or animus in a judge is as rare as it is held to be dishonourable. But we cannot forget that in the majority of even the more advanced countries of the world these three conditions are not yet found, and that where they do exist they are only recent acquirements. In the latest born, and in many respects the most advanced of the great commonwealths, in the United States of America, the corruption of a number of the inferior courts is undeniable, and is tolerated with a most disappointing patience by the people. In England Judge Jeffries is no very remote memory, and Lord Bacon's acceptance of presents from litigants in his court has only been made more certain by recent investigations. An absolutely honest intention to give even-handed justice to all is, therefore, even in England, only a recent attainment, and in no country is the honest intention always successful in realising itself. But if this be so among the civilised nations of the West, we may say that in Oriental countries there has been little of systematic and continuous effort to give even-handed justice at all. Yet nowhere

has the sinfulness and the destructiveness of corruption in judgment been more impassionedly and more frequently set forth by the highest authorities in religion and morals, than in the East. Tupper, our most recent authority, in writing of *Our Indian Protectorate*, p. 289, describes the Indian attitude to law thus: "There was not that reverence for law which in Europe is in all probability very largely due to the influence of the Roman law, and to the teaching of the Roman Catholic and other Christian Churches. So far as there was a germ out of which the respect for law ought to have grown, it was to be found in dislike to actions plainly opposed to custom and tradition. There was a deeply rooted and widespread conviction that there could be no rule to which exceptions could not be made, if agreeable to the discretion of the chief or any of his delegates. The chief was set above the law; it did not limit his authority by any constitution. There was no legislation for the improvement of law. The administration of justice was extremely imperfect." The same writer describes the result of such a state of mind in his picture of Mahratta rule (p. 247). "There was," he says, "no prescribed form of trial. Men were seized on slight suspicions. Presumptions of guilt were freely made. Torture was employed to compel confession. Prisoners for theft were often whipped at intervals to make them discover where the stolen property was hidden. *Ordinarily no law was referred to except in cases affecting religion.*" That there were both Hindu codes and Mohammedan codes in existence which claimed and were believed to have Divine authority made no difference in India. Nor does it make any in Persia to-day.[1]

Now, in coming to the consideration of the views of justice embodied in Old Testament law, and the quality of

[1] See *ante*, p. 304.

the judiciary in ancient Israel, we must take not Western but Eastern ideas as our standard. Judging from that point of view, it should create no prejudice in our minds if we find on the first glance that all men were not equal before the ancient law of Israel; that for a considerable period, if not during the whole political existence of Israel, there was no very extensive written law; and that arbitrary and corrupt judgment was only too common at all times. For none of these defects would indicate in ancient Israel the same evils as similar defects in nations of our time would indicate. They are rather defects in the process of being overcome, than defects arising from feeble or vitiated life. If there was a constant movement towards the highest state of things, that is all we can demand or expect to find.

Now there does seem to have been that. As has been well pointed out by Dr. Oort,[1] in the tribes which became Israel justice must have been administered by the heads of the various bodies which went to make these up. The household was ruled even in matters of life and death solely by the father; the family, in the wider sense, was judged by its own heads; the tribes by the elders of the tribes, and there probably was no appeal from one tribunal to another. Each tribunal was final in its own domain. It may be, also, that the judicial function was in all these bodies exercised in the lax and timid fashion common among Bedouin tribes to-day.[2] In all cases, too, it is probable that in the pre-Mosaic time the standard of judgment was customary law. Only with this very great modification can Oort's epigrammatic description of the situation —"There was no law, but there were givers of legal decisions"—be accepted. So far as can be ascertained, the customs according to which men were expected to live were perfectly well known, and within certain narrow limits

[1] Cf. *Oud-Israël Rechtswezen*, pp. 10 ff.

[2] Cf. Doughty, *Arabia Deserta*, vol. i., p. 249.

of variation were extraordinarily stable. How stable customary law may be made, even in the midst of a society governed in the main according to written law in its strictest sense, may be seen in the execration which any breach of the Ulster custom of tenant right met with, before that custom was embodied in any statutes. And in antiquity the stringency of custom can hardly be exaggerated. Under it, when thoroughly established, there was, in all the cases covered by it, only this one way of acting for all, both men and women, who were fit for society at all. Any alternative course was probably inconceivable in the tribal stage of the Israelites' existence.

But a change would doubtless be wrought whenever the appointment of a king took place. Then national law would appear, in embryo at least; and at first, until custom had grown up in this region also, it would largely be an expression of the will of the king, and of the royal officers instructed and trained by the king. But it would have free and unchallenged course only when it claimed authority in matters lying outside of the family and tribal jurisdictions. Wherever it attempted to interfere with tribal or family rights, danger to the kingship of the most acute kind would be sure to arise. In all probability, it was disregard of this axiomatic truth which made Solomon's reign so burdensome to the people and tore the kingdom asunder under Rehoboam. Ahab too fell a victim to his disregard of it. Lastly, the introduction of elaborate written codes of law would, if it came as the crown of such a development, depose custom from its supremacy, though it would not abolish it; and would substitute for it as the main element in all judicial matters the written prescription, which is the necessary presupposition of a fully organised judiciary of the modern type, with a regulated and definite power of appeal.

But in the case of ancient Israel there is a distinguish-

ing element which has to be fitted into this ordinary scheme of progression, and that is the Divine revelation to Moses. Taken up at the tribal stage by the Mosaic revelation, the Israelite tribes were touched and welded into coherence, if not quite as a nation, at least as the people of Yahweh, so that during all the distracting days of the Judges they kept up in essentials their social and religious unity.[1] And with the religious union there must have come administrative uniformity to some considerable extent. The jurisdiction of the heads of households, of heads of families, and of the tribal elders would be as little interfered with as possible; but, as we have seen, all customs and rights had to be reviewed from the point of view of the new religion, and appeal to Moses as the prophet of it must have often been unavoidable. Just as his first followers were continually coming to Mohammed, to ask whether this or that ancient custom could be followed by professors of Islam, so there must have been constant appeals to Moses. So long as he lived, therefore, he, and after him Joshua and Moses' fellow-tribesmen the sons of Levi, as being specially zealous for the religion of Yahweh, must have been constantly called in to assist the customary judges; and so the habit of appeal must have grown in Israel long before there was any king. Thus also a common standard of judgment would be established. That standard must necessarily have been the law of Yahweh, *i.e.* the new Yahwistic principles and all that might *prima facie* be deduced from them, together with so much of custom and tradition as had been accepted as compatible with these principles. We have stated the reasons for holding that the Decalogue was Mosaic, and the Book of the Covenant may be taken also to represent what the current law in Mosaic or sub-Mosaic time was held to be. As Oort well says (*loc. cit.*), when we know that the Hittites about

[1] Cf. Nowack, *Die sozialen Probleme in Israel*, p. 5.

the middle of the fourteenth century B.C. concluded a treaty with Rameses II. of Egypt the terms of which were written upon a silver plate, "why may there not also have been written statements regarding the mutual rights and duties of the people of a town, engraved upon stone or metal, and set forth openly for inspection?" What he confines to mere town business and refers to the time of the Judges, we may without risk extend to a general fundamental law like the Decalogue, or even to the Book of the Covenant, and date it in the time of Moses. Writing was so common an accomplishment in Canaan before the Exodus, that such a supposition is not in the least improbable. These written laws formed the crown of the law of Yahweh, and by them all the rest was raised to a higher level and transformed.

As new men, new times, and new difficulties arose, the priest became the special organ of Divine direction. It may be that the priestly Torah was largely the result of the sacred lot; but the questions that were put, and the manner in which they were put, would be decided ultimately by the conception the priest had of the truth about God. The teaching of the Decalogue would therefore be the dominant and formative power in all that was spoken by the priest and for Yahweh. In the disorganised state into which Israel fell during the time of the Judges, when, as Deuteronomy takes for granted, and as 1 Kings iii. 2 and 3 asserts, the legitimate worship of Yahweh was carried on at many centres, the substantial sameness of the tradition as to the history of Israel, in all the varied forms in which we encounter it, is proof sufficient that at each of the great sanctuaries (which were certainly in the hands of Levitical priests) the treasure of ancient knowledge, both in law and history, was carefully and accurately preserved.[1] New decisions would be

[1] Oort, *Oud-Israël Rechtswezen*, p. 14.

given, but they came through men penetrated with the high thoughts of God, and of His people's destiny, which Moses had so fruitfully set forth. This was the element in the life of the people which all the higher minds strove to perpetuate, and, being spiritual, it spiritualised and raised all accessory things. Consequently there was, long before the kingship, what was equivalent to a national feeling of the highest kind, and the conception of justice and its administration corresponded to that.

In the Book of the Covenant, which in this matter represents so early a period that there is no mention of "judges," only of Pelilim,[1] *i.e.* arbitrators (Exod. xxi. 22), so that the tribal and family heads can alone have exercised judicial functions, we find the most solemn warnings against any legal perversion of right to gain popularity, against yielding to the vulgar temptation to oppress the poor, or to the subtler and, for generous minds, more insidious temptation, to give an unjust judgment out of pity for the poor. Israel was, moreover, to keep far from bribery, "which blindeth them that have sight, and perverteth righteous causes." In no way was the law to be used for criminal or oppressive purposes. From the very first, therefore, in Israel the higher principles of faith and life set themselves to combat *à outrance* the tendency to unjust judgment, which seems now, at least, quite ineradicable in the East, save among the Bedouin.[2]

A still higher note is struck in the repetition of the law in the Book of Deuteronomy. In chap. i., originally part of a historic introduction to the book proper, we read: "Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between a man and his brother, and the

[1] A probable parallel to these may be found in the non-official arbiters mentioned by Doughty. *Arabia Deserta*, vol. i. pp. 145 and 502-3.

[2] Doughty, vol. i., p. 249.

stranger that is with him. Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; ye shall hear the small and the great alike; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment (*i.e.* the whole judicial process and function) is God's; and the cause that is too hard for you ye shall bring unto me (Moses), and I will hear it." Yes, the judgment is God's. Just as the whole of moral duty towards man was raised by the Decalogue to a new and more intimate relation with God, so here justice, the fundamental necessity of a sound and stable political state, is lifted out of the conflict of mean and selfish motives, in which it must eventually go down, and is set on high as a matter in which the righteous God is supremely concerned. In this, as in all things, Israel was called to a lonely eminence of ideal perfection by the character of the God whom they were bound to serve. Therefore it strikes us with no surprise that justice is insisted upon almost with passion in Deut. xvii. 20: "Justice, justice shalt thou pursue after, that thou mayest live and possess the land which Yahweh thy God giveth thee"; or that it is made one of the conditions of Israel's permanence as a nation. In chap. xxiv. 17 we read, "Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take the widow's raiment to pledge"; in xxv. 1 and 2, "If there be a plea between men, . . . then they (*i.e.* the judges) shall justify the righteous and condemn the wicked." For any other course of conduct would bring guilt upon the nation in the sight of Yahweh; and how jealously that was guarded against is seen in the sacrifice and ritual imposed for the purification of the people from the guilt of a murder the perpetrator of which was unknown (Deut. xxi. 1-9). Unatoned for and disregarded, such a crime brought disturbance into those relations between Israel and their God upon which their very existence as a nation depended; and the disregard of justice, where wrongs were committed

by known persons and were left unpunished, was of course more deadly. So the author of Deuteronomy looked upon it; and the prophets, from the first of them to the last, brand unjust judgment, the perverting the course of legal justice, as the most alarming sign of national decay. The righteous God, with whom there was no respect of persons, could not permanently favour a people whose judges and rulers disregarded righteousness; and when destruction actually came upon this people, it was proclaimed to be God's doing, "because there was no truth nor justice nor knowledge of God in the land."

Nowhere in the world, therefore, has the demand for justice been made more central than here, and nowhere has injustice been more passionately fought against. Nor have the sanctions binding to a pursuit of justice been at any period more nobly or more vividly conceived. In this main point, therefore, Israel's law stands irreproachable—marvellously so, considering its great antiquity. But we have still to inquire whether any really adequate provision was made for the general and inexpensive administration of justice. To take the latter first, law was in old Israel probably *as cheap* as it would be in the primitive East to-day, if bribery were to be stopped. To advise as to the sacred law, to plead for justice according to it, did not then, and does not now in similar circumstances, belong to any special professional class who live by it. The priest could be appealed to freely by all; and the heads of fathers' houses, as well as the tribal heads, were, by the very fact that they were such, bound to give judgment among their people, and to appear for and take responsibility for them when they had a cause with persons beyond the limits of the particular families and tribes. Justice, consequently, was in ordinary circumstances perfectly free to all.

And from a very early time earnest efforts were made

to make it equally *accessible*. At first, when the people were in one army or train, before they came to Sinai, an overwhelming burden was laid upon Moses. As the prophet of the new dispensation all difficulties were brought to him. But at Jethro's suggestion, as JE tells us in Exod. xviii. 13 ff., and as Deuteronomy repeats in chap. . 16, he chose men of each tribe, or took the heads of each tribe, and set them as captains of thousands and hundreds and fifties and tens. Not improbably this was primarily a military organisation, but to these captains was committed also jurisdiction over those under them. In all ordinary cases they judged them and their families in the spirit of Yahwism, as well as commanded them; and in this way, as has already been pointed out, the customary law was revised in accordance with Yahwistic principles. Justice too was brought to every man's door. The only question that suggests itself is, whether these captain-judges were the ordinary family and tribal heads, organised for this purpose by Moses. On the whole this would seem to have been so, and it may well be that Jethro's suggestion had in view the danger of ignoring them, as well as the burden which Moses' sole judgeship laid upon him. But with the advance to the conquest of Canaan a new situation emerged, and the probability is that more and more, as the tribes fell into entire or semi-isolation, the tribal organisation in its natural shape would come to the front again. Deuteronomy, however, tells us little if anything of this. In the main passage regarding this matter (xvii. 8-13), where provision is made for an appeal to a central court, the legislation is entirely for a period much later than Moses. Like the law regarding sacrifice at one altar, the judicial provisions of Deuteronomy seem all to be bound up with the place which Yahweh shall choose, viz. the Solomonic Temple in Jerusalem. We may consequently conclude

that the judicial arrangements to which Deuteronomy alludes existed only after the Israelite kingship had been for some time established at Jerusalem. We have no distinct evidence for the existence of a central high court in David's days; and from the story of Absalom's rebellion we should gather that the old, simple Oriental method still prevailed, according to which the king, like the heads of tribes, families, etc., judged every one who came to him, personally, at the gate of the royal city. But Samuel is said in 1 Sam. vii. 16 to have annually gone on circuit to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah. According to the school of Wellhausen, nearly the whole of this chapter is the work of a Deuteronomic writer about the year 600. In that case, of course, it would be difficult to prove that the arrangement attributed to Samuel was not a mere echo of what was done in Josiah's day; though, if the Deuteronomic prescriptions were carried out then, there would be no need for such a system. On the other hand, if Budde and Cornill be right in tracing the chapter back to JE, this habit of going on circuit must have been an ancient one, possibly dating from Samuel's time. That this latter view is the correct one is in a degree confirmed by the statement in viii. 2 that Samuel's sons were installed by him as judges in Israel, at Beersheba. This belongs to E, and it would seem to indicate the beginnings of such a system as Deuteronomy presupposes.

But it is only in the days of Jehoshaphat (873—849 B.C.) that an arrangement like that in Deuteronomy is mentioned. From 2 Chron. xix. 5 ff. we learn that "he set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city. Moreover in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites and of the priests, and of the heads of the fathers' houses, for the judgment of Yahweh and for controversies." Further, it is stated that Amariah the chief priest was set over the judges in

Jerusalem in all Yahweh's matters, *i.e.* in all religious questions, and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael the prince of the house of Judah in all the king's matters, *i.e.* in all secular affairs. Of course few advanced critics will admit that the Books of Chronicles are reliable in such matters. But that judgment is altogether too sweeping, and here we would seem to have a well-authenticated record of what Jehoshaphat actually did.

For it will be observed, that when we take up the various notices in regard to the administration of justice, we have a well-defined progress from Moses to Jehoshaphat. Moses was chief judge and committed ordinary cases to the tribal and family heads who were chosen as military leaders, each judging his own detachment. After passing the Jordan, the whole matter would seem to have fallen back into the hands of the tribal heads, with the occasional help of the heroes who delivered and judged Israel. At the end of this period Samuel, as head of the State, went on circuit, and appointed his sons judges in Beersheba, thus initiating a new system, which, had it been successful, might have superseded the tribal and family heads altogether. But it was a failure, and was not repeated. With the rise of the kingship the courts received further organisation. If the Chronicler can be trusted, Levites to the number of six thousand were appointed to be judges and Shoterim. The number seems excessive; but the appointment of Levites to act as assessors with the tribal and other heads would be a natural expedient for a king like David to have recourse to, if he desired to secure uniformity of judgment, and to bring the courts under his personal influence. The next step would naturally be that which is attributed to Jehoshaphat, and it is precisely that which Deuteronomy points to as being already at work in his time. We have, consequently, more than the late authority of the Chronicler for

Jehoshaphat's high court. The probabilities of the case point so strongly to the rise of some such judicial system about that period, that it would require some positive proof, not mere negative suspicion, to lead us to reject the narrative. In any case this must have been the system in Josiah's day, and afterwards. For when Jeremiah was arraigned for prophesying destruction to the Temple and to Jerusalem, the process against him was conducted on similar lines to those laid down in Deuteronomy. The princes judged, the priests (curiously enough along with the false prophets) made the charge, *i.e.* stated that the prophet's conduct was worthy of death, and the princes acquitted. During the Exile it is probable that the "elders" of the people were permitted to judge them in all ordinary cases, but we have no certain proof that this was so. After the return from Babylon, however, the local courts were re-established, probably in the very form in which they appear in the New Testament (Matt. v. 22, x. 17; Mark xiii. 9; Luke xii. 14-58).

Throughout the whole history of Israel, therefore, courts of justice were easily accessible to every man, whether he were rich or poor. No doubt the free, open-air, Eastern manner of administering justice was favourable to that; but from the days of Moses onward we have fairly conclusive proof that the leaders of the people made it their continual care that wherever a wrong was suffered there should be some court to which an appeal for redress could be made.

The justice aimed at in Israel was, therefore, *impartial* and *accessible*. We have still to inquire whether it was *merciful* or cruel in its infliction of punishment. Dr. Oort says it was a hard law in this respect, but one is at a loss to see how that view can be sustained. There is no mention of torture in connection with legal proceedings, either in the history or in the legislation. Nor is there any instance

mentioned in which an accused person was imprisoned until he confessed. Indeed imprisonment would not appear to have been a legal punishment in Israel, nor in any antique state. The idea of providing maintenance for those who had offended against the law was one which could never have occurred to any one in antiquity. Prisons are, of course, frequently mentioned in Scripture; but they were used, up to the time of Ezra, only for the safe-keeping of persons charged with crime till they could be brought before the judges. Sometimes, as in the case of the prophets, men were imprisoned to prevent them from stirring up the people; but this procedure was nowhere sanctioned by law. Further, the crimes for which the punishment prescribed in the ancient law was death were few. Idolatry, adultery, unnatural lust, sorcery, and murder or manslaughter, together with striking or cursing parents and kidnapping —these were all. Considering that idolatry and sorcery were high treason in its worst forms, so far as this people was concerned, and that impurity threatened the family in a much more direct and immediate fashion then than it does now, while the people were naturally inclined to it, one must wonder that the list of capital crimes is so short. Contrast this with Blackstone's statement in regard to England (quoted *Ency. Brit.*, iv., p. 589): "Among the variety of actions which men are daily liable to commit, no less than one hundred and sixty have been declared by Act of Parliament to be felonies without benefit of clergy, or, in other words, to be worthy of instant death." It is only in comparatively recent years that the punishment of death has been practically restricted to murder in England. Yet that is almost the case in the ancient Jewish law; for the exceptions are such as would reappear in England if it were more sparsely populated and manners were rougher. In Australia, for example, highway robbery under arms and violence to women are

capital crimes, just because the country is sparsely inhabited and the households unprotected. Nor were the modes of death inflicted cruel. Only three—viz. impalement, and burning, and stoning—appear to be so. But it may be believed that in the cases contemplated by the law death in some less painful manner had preceded the two former, as is certainly the case in Josh. vii. 15 and 25, and in Deut. xxi. 22. As for the latter, it must have been horrible to look upon, but in all probability the criminal's agony was rarely a prolonged one. The other method of execution, by the sword namely, was humane enough. Dr. Oort tells us that mutilations were common; but his proof is only this, that in the treaty between the Hittite king and Rameses II. we read, concerning inhabitants of Egypt who have fled to the land of the Hittites and have been returned, "His mother shall not be put to death; he shall not be punished in his eyes, nor on his mouth, nor on the soles of his feet." The same provision is made for Hittite fugitives. From this evidence of the custom of surrounding peoples, and from the fact that the *jus talionis* is announced in the Scriptures by the familiar formula, "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot," Dr. Oort draws this conclusion. But he appears to forget that the *jus talionis* was common to almost all the peoples of the ancient world, and is referred to in the Pentateuch, not as a new principle, but as a custom coming down from immemorial time. Consequently, though there must once have been a time in which it was carried out in its literal form, that time probably was past when the laws referring to it were written. In Rome, and probably in other lands where this custom existed, it early gave place to the custom of giving and receiving money payments. Most probably this was the case in Israel, at least from the time of the Exodus. For the new religion introduced by Moses was

merciful. But these references to the principle of retaliation tell us nothing as to the frequency or otherwise of mutilation as a punishment. No instance of mutilation being inflicted either as a retaliation or as a punishment occurs in the Old Testament, and the probability is that cases were never numerous. Apart from retaliation they are never mentioned; and we may, I think, set it down as one of the distinctive merits of the Israelite law that it never was betrayed into sanctioning the cutting off of hands or feet or ears or noses as general punishment for crime. But so far as the principle of the *lex talionis* was retained, its effect was wholesome. It was a continual reminder that all free Israelites were equals in the sight of Yahweh. And not only so, it enforced as well as asserted equality. Any poor man mutilated by a rich man could demand the infliction of the same wound upon his oppressor. He could reject his excuses, and refuse his money, and bring home to him the truth that they had equal rights and duties.

In this way this seemingly harsh law helped to lay the foundation for our modern conception of humanity, which regards all men as brethren. For the teaching of our Lord, which fulfilled all that the polity and religion of ancient Israel had foreshadowed of good, broke down the walls of partition between Jew and Gentile, and made all men brethren by revealing to them a common Father. It surely is strange and sad that those who specially make liberty, equality, and fraternity their watchwords, have received so false an impression of the religion of both the Old and New Testaments, that they pride themselves on rejecting both. When all is said, the levelling of barriers which the crushing weight of Roman power brought about, and the common methods and elements of thought which the Greek conquests had spread all over the civilised world, would never have made the brotherhood of man the universally accepted doctrine it is. The

truths which made it credible came from the revelation given by God to His chosen people, and its final and conclusive impulse was given to it by the lips of Christ.

In face of that cardinal fact it is vain to point out as one of the defects of this law that all men were not equal before it. Women were not equal with men, nor were foreigners nor slaves equal with freeborn Israelites; but the seed of all that later times were to bring was already there. The principles which at the long end of the day have abolished slavery, raised women to the equal position they now occupy, and made peace with foreigners increasingly the desire of all nations, had their first hold upon men given them here. In all these directions the Mosaic law was epoch-making. In the fifth commandment, as well as in the legislation regarding the punishment of a rebellious son, the mother is put upon the same level as the father. However subordinate woman's position in the larger public life might be, within the home she was to be respected. There, in her true domain, she was man's equal, and was acknowledged to have an equal claim to reverence from her children.

In precisely the same way the "stranger" was freed from disability and protected. In the earliest days, when the Israelite community was still being formed, whole groups of strangers were received into it and obtained full rights, as for example the Kenites and Kenizzites. But though this was a promise of what Israel was ultimately to be to the world, the necessities of the situation, the need to keep intact the treasure of higher religion which was committed to this people, compelled the adoption of a more separatist policy. Yet "in no other nation of antiquity were strangers received and treated with such liberality and humanity as in Israel." They were freely afforded the protection of the law; they were, in short, received as

"a kind of half-citizens, with definite rights and duties."[1] Further, though the *ger* was not bound to all the religious practices and rites of the Israelite, yet he was permitted, and in some cases commanded, to take part in their religious worship. If he consented to circumcise all his house he might even share in the Passover feast. All oppression of such an one was also rigorously forbidden, and to a large extent the stranger shared in the benefits conferred by the provision for the poor of the land which the law made compulsory.

Nor was the case otherwise with slaves. Equality there was not, and could not be; but in the provisions for the emancipation of the Israelite slave and the introduction of penalties for undue harshness, it began to be recognised that the slave stood, in some degree at least, on the same level as his master—he too was a man.

Taking it as a whole, therefore, the ancient world will be searched in vain for any legislation equal to this in the "promise and the potency" of its fundamental ideas as to justice. Here, as nowhere else, we can see the radical principles which should dominate in the administration of justice laying hold upon mankind, and that there was a living will and power behind these principles is shown in the steady movement toward something higher which characterised Israelite law. In the pursuit of impartiality, accessibility, and humanity, the teachers of Israel were untiring, and the sanctions by which they surrounded and guarded all that tended to make the administration of justice effective in the high sense were unusually solemn and powerful. The result has been most remarkable. All the ages of civilised men since have been the heirs of Israel in this matter. Roman

[1] Riehm, *Handwörterbuch*, Baethgen, vol. i., p. 463.

influence and the influence of the Christian Church have no doubt been powerful, and the manifold exigencies of life have drawn out and made explicit much which was only implicit in the ancient days. But the higher qualities of our modern administration of justice can be traced back step by step to Biblical principles, and the course of development laid bare. When that is done, it is seen that the almost ideal purity and impartiality of the best modern tribunals is the completion of what the Israelite law and methods began. In this one instance at least the great Mosaic principles have come to fruition; and from the security and peace, the contentment and the confidence, with which impartial justice has filled the minds of men, we can estimate how potent to cure the ills of our social and moral state the realisation of the other great Mosaic ideals would be. It should be a source of encouragement to all who look for a time when "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ," that something like the ideal of justice has so far been realised. It has no doubt been a weary time in coming, and it has as yet but a narrow and perhaps precarious footing in the world. But it is here, with its healing and beneficent activity; and in that fact we may well see a pledge that all the rest of the Divinely given ideals for the Kingdom of God will one day be realised also. Such a consummation, however remote it may seem to our human impatience, however devious and winding the paths by which alone it can draw near, will come most surely, and in our approach to the ideal in our judicial system we may well see the firstfruits of a richer and more plentiful harvest.

CHAPTER XXII

LAWS OF PURITY (CHASTITY AND MARRIAGE)

IN dealing with the ten commandments it has been already shown that, though these great statements of religious and moral truth were to some extent inadequate as expressions of the highest life, they yet contained the living germs of all that has followed. But we cannot suppose that the reality of Israelite life from the first corresponded with them. They contained much that only the experience and teaching of ages could fully bring to light; therefore we cannot expect that the actual laws in regard to the relations of the sexes and the virtue of chastity should stand upon the same high level as the Decalogue. The former represent the reality, this the ultimate ideal of Israelite law on these subjects. But neither is unimportant in forming an estimate of the value of the revelation given to Israel, and of the moral condition of early Israel itself, nor can either be justly viewed altogether alone. The actual law at any moment in the history of Israel must be regarded as inspired and upborne by the ideal set forth in the ten commandments. But it must, at the same time, be a very incomplete realisation of these, and its various stages will be best regarded as instalments of advance towards that comparative perfection.

In regard to the relations of the sexes and the virtue of purity this must be peculiarly the case. For though chastity has been safeguarded by almost all nations up

to a certain low point, it has never been really cherished by any naturalistic system. Nor has it ever been favoured by mere humanism.[1] Consequently there is no point of morals in regard to which man has more conspicuously failed to work out the merely animal impulse from his nature than in this. And yet, for all the higher ends of life, as well as for the prosperity and vigour of mankind, purity in the sexual relations is entirely vital. One great cause of the decay of nations, nay, even of civilisations, has been the abandonment of this virtue. This was the main cause of the destruction of the Canaanites. It may even be said to have been the cause of the wreck of the whole ancient world. We should consequently measure what the Mosaic influence did for purity of life, not by comparing early Israelite laws with what has been accomplished by Christianity, but with the condition of the Semitic peoples surrounding Israel, in and after the Mosaic times.

What that was we know. Their religions, far from discouraging sexual immorality, made it a part of their holiest rites. Both men and women gave themselves up to natural and unnatural lusts, in honour of their gods. To the north, and south, and east, and west of Israel these practices prevailed, and as a natural result the moral fabric of these nations' life fell into utter ruin. In private life adultery, and the still more degrading sin of Sodom were common. The man had a right to indiscriminate divorce and remarriage, and marriage connections now reckoned incestuous, such as those between brother and sister, were entirely approved. In all these points Israel

[1] Cf. Renan, *Philosophic Dialogues*, iii. p. 26: "La nature a intérêt à ce que la femme soit chaste et à ce que l'homme ne le soit pas trop. De là un ensemble d'opinions qui couvre d'infamie la femme non chaste, et frappe presque de ridicule l'homme chaste. Et l'opinion quand elle est profonde, obstinée, c'est la nature même."

as a nation was without reproach. The higher teaching this people had received in respect to the character of God, and it may be some reminiscence of Egyptian custom, which was in some respects purer than that of the Semitic peoples, raised them to a higher level. Yet in the main the early Israelite view of women was fundamentally the uncivilised one.

But at all periods of Israelite history, even the earliest, women had asserted their personality. In the eye of the law they might be the chattels of their male relatives, but as a fact they were dealt with as persons, with many personal rights. They had no independent position in the community, it is true. They could take no part in a festival so important as the Passover, nor were they free to make vows without the consent of their husbands. In other ways also social restraints were laid upon them. Nevertheless their position in early Israel was much higher than it is in the East to-day, and their liberty was in no wise unreasonably abridged. In David's day women could appear in public to converse with men without scandal.[1] They also took part in religious festivals and processions, giving life to them by beating their timbrels, by singing, and by dancing.[2] They could be present also at all ordinary sacrifices and at sacrificial feasts; and, as we see in the case of Deborah and others, they could occupy a high, almost a supreme, position as prophetesses. In the main, too, the relations between husband and wife were loving and respectful, and in Israel's best days, when the people still remained landed yeomanry, the wife, by her industry within the house, supplemented and completed her husband's labour in the fields. The Israelite woman was consequently a very important person in the community, whatever her status in law might be; and if

[1] Cf. 1 Sam. xxv. 18 ff; 2 Sam. xiv. 1 ff.

[2] Cf. Exod. xv. and 1 Sam. xviii. 6 f.

she had not the full rights which are now granted to her sex in Western and Christian lands, her position was for the times a noble and independent one. That all this was so was largely due to the improvements which Mosaism wrought on the basis of that ancient Semitic custom which we sketched at the beginning of this chapter, and with which it seems natural to suppose the Israelite tribes had also begun.

Bearing these preliminary considerations in mind, we now go on to consider the actual legislation in regard to the relations of the sexes. But here we must once more recall the fact that, in regard to all matters vitally affecting the community, there had always been a custom, and even before written law appears that custom had been adopted and modified in Yahwism by Moses himself. That this was actually the case here is rendered highly probable by the history of legislation in this matter. In the Book of the Covenant there is no mention of sexual sin, save in one passage (Exod. xxii. 16), where the penalty for seduction of a virgin who is not betrothed is that the seducer shall offer a "*mohar*" for her, and marry her without possibility of divorce, if her father consent. If he will not, then the "*mohar*" is forfeited to the father nevertheless, as compensation for the degradation of his daughter. But it is obvious that there must have been laws or customs regulating marriage other than this, for without them there could have been no such crime as is here punished. Obviously, also, there must have been laws or customs of divorce. But of what these laws of marriage and divorce were Exodus gives us no hint. Deuteronomy, the next code, which on the critical hypothesis arose at a much later time as a revision of the Book of the Covenant, contains much more, *i.e.* it draws out of the obscurity of unwritten custom a more extensive series of provisions in regard to purity. The Law of Holiness then adds largely to

Deuteronomy, and with it the main points of the law of purity have attained to written expression. But the influence of the higher standard set in the Decalogue also makes itself felt,—not in the law so much as in the historic books and the prophets—and our task now is to trace out first the legal development, then the prophetical, and to show how the whole movement culminated and was crowned in the teaching of Christ.

Beginning then with Deuteronomy, we find that the chastity of women was surrounded by ample safeguards. Religious prostitution was absolutely prohibited (Deut. xxiii. 18). Further, if any violence was done to a woman who had been betrothed, the punishment of the wrong was death; if done to a woman who was not betrothed, the wrong was atoned for by payment of fifty shekels of silver to her father, and by offering marriage without possibility of divorce. If marriage was refused, then the fifty shekels was retained by the father in consideration of the wrong done him. When the woman was a sharer in the guilt the punishment in all cases was death; while pre-nuptial unchastity, when discovered after marriage, was punished, as adultery also was, with the same severity.[1] In women who were free, therefore, purity was demanded in Israel as strenuously as it ever has been anywhere, though in man the only limit to sexual indulgence was the demand, that in seeking it he should not infringe upon the father's property in his daughter, or the husband's in his wife or his betrothed bride.

Admittedly the original underlying motive for this moral severity was a low one, the mere proprietary rights of the father or husband. But it would be a mistake to suppose that purely ethical and religious motives had no place in establishing the customs or enactments which we find

[1] Chap. xxii. 13-18.

in Deuteronomy. With the lapse of time higher motives entwined themselves with the coarse strand of personal proprietary interest, which had originally, though perhaps never alone, been the line of limitation. Gradually there grew up a standard of higher purity; and when Deuteronomy was written, though the original line was still clearly visible, it was justified by appeals to a moral sense which reached far beyond the original motives of the customary law. The continually recurring burden of Deuteronomy in dealing with these matters is that to work "folly in Israel" is a crime for which only the severest punishment can atone. To "extinguish the evil from Israel," and to put away such things as were "abominations to Yahweh their God," are the great reasons on which the writer of Deuteronomy founds the claim for obedience in these cases. Obviously, therefore, by his time, under the teaching of the religion of Yahweh, Israel had risen to a moral height which took account of graver interests than the rights of property in legislating for female purity. The cases included in the law had been determined by considerations of that kind; but the sanctions by which the commands were buttressed had entirely changed their character. The holiness of God and the dignity of man, the consideration of what alone was worthy of a "son of Israel," have taken the place of the coarser sanctions. In this way a possibility of unlimited moral progress was secured, since the cause of purity was indissolubly bound to the general and irresistible advance of religious and moral enlightenment in the chosen people.

Moreover the personality of the woman was acknowledged in the entire acquittal of the betrothed woman who had been exposed to outrage in the country, where her cries could bring no help. In the earliest times most probably the punishment of death would have been inflicted

equally in that case, since the husband's property had been deteriorated to such a degree as to make it unworthy of him. But in the Deuteronomic provision quite other things are drawn into the estimate. The moral guilt of the person concerned is now the decisive consideration. The woman has ceased to be a mere chattel, and the full claims of her personality are in the way to be recognised. These were great advances, and for these it is vain to seek for other causes than the persistent upward pressure of the Mosaic religion. The moral superiority of Israel at the time of the conquest over the much more cultured Canaanites, as also over the nomadic tribes to which they were more nearly related, is due, as Stade says, ultimately to their religion; and no reader of the Old Testament, in our time at least, can fail to see that their moral progress in the land they conquered depended entirely upon the same cause. At the Deuteronomic epoch purity had already been placed upon a worthy basis, as a moral achievement of the first importance, and impurity had taken its proper place as a degrading sin. But much still remained to be done before these principles could be extended into all domains of life equally.

How far they had penetrated in early times may perhaps best be seen in the Deuteronomic references to divorce. Before Deuteronomy there is no law of divorce, nor indeed is there any after it. We may perhaps even say that there is in it not so much the statement of a law of divorce, as a reference to custom which the writer wishes to correct or reinforce in one particular respect only. Notwithstanding the Jewish view, therefore, which finds in Deut. xxiv. 1-4 a divorce law, we must adduce the passage as a new and striking proof of what we have all along asserted, that neither Deuteronomy nor any other of the legal codes can be taken as complete statements of what was legally permitted or forbidden in Israel.

Behind all of them there is a vast mass of unwritten customary law, and divorce was doubtless always determined by it. That this was the case will be seen at once if the passage we are now concerned with be rightly translated. It runs thus: "When a man taketh a wife and marrieth her, and it shall be (if she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found in her some unseemly thing) that he writeth her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it into her hand, and sendeth her out of his house, and she go forth out of his house and goeth and becometh the wife of another man, and if the latter husband also hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand and send her out of his house, or if the latter husband die who took her to him to wife, then her former husband who sent her away may not take her again to be his wife after that she has permitted herself to be defiled." All the passage provides for, therefore, is that a divorced woman shall not be remarried to the divorcing man after she has been married again, even though she be separated from her second husband by divorce or death. There is consequently no law of divorce here stated. There is merely a reference to a general law or custom by which divorce was permitted for "any unseemly thing," and according to which a chief wife at any rate could be divorced only by a "bill of divorcement," and not by mere word of mouth, as is common in many Eastern lands to-day. Mosaic influence may have procured this last slight increase in rigour, and Deuteronomy certainly adds three other restrictions, viz. that after remarriage a woman cannot be again married to her first husband, and that pre-nuptial wrong done to a woman by her husband, or a false accusation by him after marriage, takes away his right of divorce altogether. But the woman has no right of divorce at all, so firmly fixed throughout all Old Testament time was the belief in the

inferiority of women. On the whole, therefore, divorce in Israel remained, after the law had dealt with it, much on the level to which the tribal customs had brought it. So far as the legislation dealt with it, it tended to restriction; but when all is said it remains true that the Israelite *law* of divorce was in the main much what it would have been had there been no revelation. But the *spirit* of the religion of Yahweh was against laxity in this matter, and this more rigorous feeling finds expression in the evident distaste for the remarriage of a divorced woman which is expressed in Deut. xxiv. 4. Remarriage is not forbidden; but the woman who remarries is spoken of as one who has "let herself be defiled." No such expression could have been used, had not remarriage after divorce been looked upon as something which detracted from perfect feminine purity. The legislator evidently regarded it as the higher way for a divorced woman to remain unmarried so long at least as the divorcing husband lived. If she remained so, the possibility of reunion was always kept open, and the law evidently looked upon the ultimate annulment of the divorce as the course which was most consonant with the ideal of marriage.

It is thus clearly seen how our Lord's statement (Matt. xix. 8)—"Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it hath not been so"—is true.

And when we leave the law and come to history and prophecy, we find this view to have been a prevalent one from early times. In one of the earliest connected historical narratives, that of J (Gen. ii. 24), the union of husband and wife is said to be so peculiarly intimate that it makes them one body, so that separation is equivalent to mutilation. And the prophets remain true to this conception of marriage, as the one which fitted best into their deeper and loftier views of morality. From Hosea

onwards[1] they represent the indissoluble bond between Yahweh and His people as a marriage relation, founded on free choice and unchangeable love. The possibility of divorce is no doubt often admitted, and the conduct of Israel is represented as justifying that course. But the prophetic message always is that the love of God will never permit Him to put away His people; and the people are often addressed as faithless and faint-hearted, because they yield to the temptation of believing that He has cast them off (Isa. l. 1). Evidently, therefore, the prophetic ideal of marriage was that it should be indissoluble, that it should be founded upon free mutual love, and that such a love should make it impossible for either husband or wife to give the other up, however desperate the errors of the guilty one might have been.

Perhaps the finest expression of this view occurs in Isa. liv., in the exhortation addressed to exiled Israel and beginning "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear." There the ideal Israel is urged to lay aside all her fears with this assurance: "For thy Maker is thine husband; Yahweh of Hosts is His name: and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth shall He be called. For Yahweh hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit; how can a wife of youth be rejected? saith thy God." The full meaning of this last touching question has been well brought out by Prof. Cheyne (*Isaiah*, ii., p. 55): "Even many an earthly husband (how much more then Yahweh!) cannot bear to see the misery of his divorced wife, and therefore at length recalls her; and when his wife is one who has been wooed and won in youth, how impossible is it for her to be absolutely dismissed." The rising tide of prophetic feeling on this subject culminates in the pathetic scene depicted by Malachi, who in chap. ii. 12 ff. reproves his

[1] Hosea ii. 19.

people for their cruel and frivolous use of divorce. Drawn away by love of idolatrous women, they had divorced their Hebrew wives; and these in their misery crowded the Temple, covering the altar of Yahweh with "tears and weeping and sobbing," till He could endure it no more. He had been witness of the covenant made between each of these men and the wife of his youth; yet they had broken this Divinely sanctioned bond. He therefore warns them to take heed, "for Yahweh the God of Israel saith, I hate putting away, and him who covers his garment with violence." The Rabbinic interpreters, not being minded to give up the privilege of divorce, have wrested these words into "for Yahweh the God of Israel saith, If he hate her put her away." But, so wrested, the words bring down the whole context in one ruin. They are intelligible only if they denounce divorce, and in this sense they must undoubtedly be taken.

There remains for consideration, however, a marriage which the Deuteronomist permits, which seems to run counter to all the finer feelings and instincts of his later time. It is dealt with in chap. xxv. 5-10, and is notable because it is a clear breach of the definite rule that a man should not marry his deceased brother's wife. But it will be obvious at once that the permission of this marriage stands upon quite a different footing from the prohibition. It is permitted only in a special case for definite ends; and while the sanction of the prohibition is the infliction of childlessness (Lev. xx. 21), the man who refuses to enter upon marriage with his deceased brother's wife is punished only by being put to shame by her before the elders of his city. We have not here, therefore, a law in the strict sense. It is only a recognition of a very ancient custom which is not yet abolished, though evidently public feeling was beginning to make light of the obligation. Its place in the twenty-fifth chapter,

away from the marriage laws (which are given in xxi. 10 ff, xxii. 13 ff., and xxiv. 1-4), and among duties of kindness, seems to hint this, and we may consequently take the aw as a concession. That the custom was ancient in the time of Deuteronomy may be gathered from the fact that in Hebrew there is a special technical term, *yibbēm*, for entering on such a marriage. The probability is, indeed, that levirate marriage was a pre-Mosaic custom connected with ancestor-worship. It certainly is practised by many other races, *e.g.* the Hindus and Persians, whose religions can be traced to that source. Under that system, it was necessary that the male line of descent should be kept up in order that the ancestral sacrifices might be continued, and to bear the expense of this the property of the brother dying childless was jealously preserved. In India, at present, both purposes are served by adoption, either by the childless man or by the widow. In earlier times, when fatherhood was to a large extent a merely juridical relationship,[1] when, that is to say, it was a common thing for a man to accept as his son any child born of women under his control, whether he were the father or not, the same end was also attained by this marriage.[2] Originating in this way, the practice was carried over into the Israelite social life when it changed its form, and the motives for it were then brought into line with the new and higher religion. The motive of keeping alive the name and memory of the childless man was substituted for that of securing the continuance of his worship; and the purpose of securing the permanence of property, landed property especially, in each household, was substituted for that of supplying means for the sacrifice. Later, the

[1] *The Primitive Family*, Starcke, p. 141.

[2] Indeed in India it was not only the widow of the childless man who might bear him a son whose real father was a near relation, but his childless wife also.—Maine, *Early Law*, p. 102.

motive connected with the transmission of property possibly became the main one. For, since the levirate marriage came in, according to the strict wording of our passage, whenever a man died without a son, whether he had daughters or not, this marriage would seem to have been an alternative means of keeping the property in the family to that of letting the daughters inherit.[1] But the spirit of the higher religion, as well as a more advanced civilisation, was unfavourable to it. The custom evidently was withering when Deuteronomy was written, though in Judaism it was not disallowed till post-Talmudic times.

The impression, therefore, which the laws and customs regulating the relations of men and women in Israel give to the candid student must be pronounced to be a strangely mixed one. It would probably not be too much to say that it is at first a deeply disappointing one. We have been accustomed to fill all the Old Testament utterances on this subject with the suffused light of Gospel precept and example, till we have lost sight of the lower elements undeniably present in the Old Testament laws and ideas concerning purity. But that is no longer possible. Whether of enmity or of zeal for the truth, these less worthy elements have been dragged forth into the broad light of day, and in that light we are called upon to readjust our thoughts so as to accept and account for them. Evidently at the beginning the Israelite tribes accepted the uncivilised idea of woman. On that as a basis, however, customs and laws regarding chastity, marriage and divorce were adopted, which transcended

[1] That the latter course may in some cases have been unpopular with the sonless man's nearest kin is clear, since under it the inheritance must be divided, and it might pass to remoter connections, though not beyond the tribe. The nearer relations would, therefore, probably prefer that their brother's property should be kept intact and be transmitted with his name, and this ancient custom, sanctioned and modified by Mosaism, would give them that choice.

and passed beyond that fundamental idea. The moral complicity of woman, or her innocence, in cases where her chastity had been attacked, came to be taken into account. Polygamy, though never forbidden, received grievous wounds from prophets and others of the sacred writers; and as marriage with one became more and more the ideal, the higher teachers of the people kept the indissolubleness of marriage before the public mind, till Malachi denounced divorce in Yahweh's name. In regard to the bars to marriage there was little change, probably, from the days of Moses; but the old family rules were reinforced by a deep and delicate regard for even the less palpable affections and relations which grew up in the home.

The final attainment, therefore, was great and worthy enough; but the cruder and less refined ideas, which had been inherited from pre-Mosaic custom, always make themselves felt, and have even dominated some of the laws. They dominated, even more, the practice of the people and the theory of the scribes; so that on the very eve of His coming who was to proclaim decisively the indissolubility of marriage, the great Jewish schools were wrangling whether mere caprice, or some immodesty only, could justify divorce. Nevertheless the Decalogue, with its deep and broad command, culminating in prohibition even of inward evil desire, had always had its own influence. The teachings of the prophets, which breathe passionate hatred of impurity, had taught all men of good-will in Israel that the wrath of God surely burned against it. But the stamp of imperfection was upon Old Testament teaching here as elsewhere. Like the Messianic hope, like the future of Israel, like all Israel's greatest destinies, the promise of a higher life in this respect was darkened by the inconsistencies of general practice; and uncertainty prevailed as to the direction in which men were to look for the harmonious development of the higher potencies

which were making their presence felt. It was in them rather than in the law, in the ideals rather than in the practice of the people, that the hidden power was silently doing its regenerating work. The religion of Yahweh in its central content, surrounded all laws and institutions with an atmosphere which challenged and furthered growth of every wholesome kind. The axe and hammer of the legislative builder was rarely heard at work; but in the silence which seems to some so barren, there slowly grew a fabric of moral and spiritual ideas and aspirations, which needed only the coming of Christ to make it the permanent home of all morally earnest souls.

With Him all that the past generations "had willed, or hoped, or dreamed of good" came actually to exist. He made what had been aspiration only the basis of an actual Kingdom of God. As one of its primary moral foundations He laid down the radical indissolubility of marriage, and made visible to all men the breadth of the law given in the Decalogue by forbidding even wandering desires. In doing this He completely surpassed all Old Testament teaching, and set up a standard which Christian communities as such have held to hitherto, but which from lack of elevation and earnestness they seem inclined in these days to let slip. That such a standard was ever set up was the work of a Divine revelation of a perfectly unique kind, working through long ages of upward movement. Humanity has been dragged upwards to it most unwillingly. Men have found difficulty in living at that height, and nothing is easier than to throw away all the gain of these many centuries. All that is needed is a plunge or two downwards. But if ever these plunges are taken, the long, slow effort upwards will only have to be begun again, if family life is to be firmly established, and purity is to become a permanent possession of men.

CHAPTER XXIII

LAWS OF KINDNESS

WITH the commands we now have to consider, we leave altogether the region of strict law, and enter entirely upon that of aspiration and of feeling. Kindness, by its very nature, eludes the rude compulsion of law, properly so called. It ceases to be kindness when it loses spontaneity and freedom. Precept, therefore, not law, is the utmost that any lawgiver can give in respect to it; and this is precisely what we have in Deuteronomy, so far as it endeavours to incite men to gentleness, goodness, and courtesy to one another. The author gives his people an ideal of what they ought to be in these respects, and presses it home upon them with the heartfelt earnestness which distinguishes him. That is all; but yet, if we are to do justice to him as a lawgiver, we must consider and estimate the moral value of these precepts; for, properly speaking, they are the flower of his legal principles, and they reveal in detail, and therefore, for the average man, most impressively, the spirit in which his whole legislation was conceived. In the abstract no doubt he had told us that love—love to Yahweh—was to be the fundamental thing, and we have seen how deep and wide-reaching that announcement was. But a review of the precepts which indicate how he conceived that love to God should affect men's relations with men, will give that general principle a definiteness and a concreteness more impressive than a thousand homilies. For the

conception that a relation of love is the only fit relation between man and God, could not, if it were sincerely taken up, fail to throw light upon men's true relations to each other. Consequently the great declaration of the sixth chapter was bound to re-echo in the precepts to guide conduct, giving new sanctity and breadth to all man's duty to his fellows.

Of course the risk of great failure was nigh at hand: for men may be intellectually convinced that love is the element in which life ought to be lived, and may proclaim it, who are far from being actually penetrated and filled with love, tested and increased by communion with God. As a result, much talk about love and kindly human duty has fallen with but little impulsive power upon the hearts of men. When, however, it is felt to be the expression of a present experience, such exhortation has power to move men as no other words can do. And the author of Deuteronomy was one of those who had this divinely given secret. In all parts of his book you find his words becoming winged with power, wherever love to God and man is even remotely touched upon. If our hypothesis as to the age in which he lived and wrote be correct, his must have been one of those high and rare natures which are not embittered by persecution or contemptuous neglect. Long before our Lord had spoken His decisive words on our duty to our neighbour, or St. Paul had written his great hymn to love, this man of God had been chosen to feel the truth, and had suffused his book with it, so that the only principle which can be recognised as binding together all his precepts is the central principle of the New Testament. Of course that made his ideal too high for present realisation; but he gained more than he lost; for, from Jeremiah and Josiah downwards through the years, all the noblest of his people responded to him. The splendour of his thought cast reflections upon their

minds, and these glowed and shone amid the meaner lights which Pharisaism kindled and cherished, till He came whose right it was to reign. Then Deuteronomy's true rank was seen; for from it Christ took the answers by which He repelled Satan in the temptation, and from it, too, He took that commandment which He called the first and greatest. Of course the humanity of the book had not, in expression at least, the imperial sweep of Christian brotherhood which makes all men equal, so that for it there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither wise nor unwise, neither male nor female, neither bond nor free. But *all* the chosen people are included in its sympathy; and in this field, without undue interference with private life, the author sets forth by specimen cases how the fraternal feeling should manifest itself in loving, neighbourly kindness.

As these laws or precepts of kindness are not systematically arranged, it will be necessary to group them, and we shall take first those in which it is prescribed that injury to others should be avoided. Of course criminal wrongs are not dealt with here. They have already been forbidden in the strictly legal portions of the book, and penalties have been attached to them. But in the region beyond law, there are many acts in which the difference between a good, and kindly, and sympathetic man, and a morose, and sullen, and unkindly one, can be even more clearly seen. In that region Deuteronomy is unmistakably on the side of sympathy. The poor, the slave, the helpless should, it teaches, be objects of special care to the true son of Israel. They should be treated, it shows, with a generous perception of the peculiar difficulties of their lot; and pressure upon them at these special points where their lot is hard should be abhorrent to every Israelite.

The first in order of the precepts which we are con-

sidering (chap. xxii. v. 8)—"When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a railing for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence"—reveals the fatherly and loving temper which it is the author's delight to attribute to Yahweh. As earthly parents guard their children from accidents and dangers, so Yahweh thinks of possible danger to the lives of His people, and calls for even minute precautions. The habit of sitting and sleeping upon the flat roofs of the houses has always been, and is now, prevalent in the East. Many accidents take place through this habit. In recent years Emin Pasha, who ruled so long at Wadelai, nearly lost his life by one; and here the house-owner is required in Yahweh's name to minimise that danger, "that he bring not blood upon his house." The life of each one of Yahweh's people is precious to Him; therefore it is that He will have them to guard one another. This is the principle which runs through all these precepts. In the sphere of ritual and religion the Deuteronomist does not transcend Old Testament conditions. For him as for others it is the nation which is the unit. But in the region now before us he virtually goes beyond that limitation, and emphasises the care of Yahweh for the individual, just as in the demand for love to God he had already made Israel's relation to their God depend upon each man's personal attitude. The thought that the Divine care was exerted over even "such a set of paltry ill-given animalcules as himself and his nation were," according to Carlyle's phrase, does not stagger him as it staggered Frederick the Great.

In matters like these, the unsophisticated religion of the Old Testament is most helpful to us to-day. We have analysed, and refined, and dimmed all things into abstractions, God and man among the rest. The fearless simplicity of the Old Testament restores us to ourselves, and pours fresh blood into the veins of our religion. No

faith in God as the living orderer of all the circumstances of our lives can be too strong or too detailed. The stronger and more definite it becomes, the nearer will it approach the truth. Only one danger can threaten us on that line, the danger of taking all our own plans and desires for the Divinely appointed path for us. But most men will by natural humility be saved from that presumption; and the glad assurance that they are wrapped about with the love of God is perhaps the greatest need of God's people in their many sceptical and unspiritual hours.

We cannot, therefore, be surprised that, in connection with debts and pledges for payment, the same kindness in the Divine commands should be observable. As usury was forbidden in Israel, and precautions against excessive indebtedness were exceedingly elaborate, the possibilities of oppression in connection with debt in Israel were much more limited than in most ancient communities. Nevertheless there was here a region of life in which great wrongs could still be done by a harsh and unscrupulous creditor. In order that the creditor might have some security for what he had lent, it was permitted to receive and give pledges. The precepts regarding these are contained in chap. xxiv., vv. 6, 10 ff. and 17, and express a considerate brotherly spirit, for which it would be hard to find a parallel either in ancient or modern times. The creditor who has taken a poor man's upper garment as a pledge is commanded, both in the Book of the Covenant and in Deuteronomy, to restore the garment to its owner in the evening, that he may sleep in it. In Palestine for much of the year the nights are cold enough, and the poor man has no covering save his ordinary clothes. To deprive him of these, therefore, is to inflict punishment upon him, whereas all that should be aimed at is the creditor's security. This was peculiarly offensive to Israelite feeling, as we see from the mention in Amos ii. 8

of the breach of this prescription as one of the sins for which Yahweh would not turn away Israel's punishment. Further, in no case was a widow's garment to be taken in pledge, nor the handmill used for preparing the daily flour, for that is taking "life" in pledge, as the Deuteronomist says with the feeling for the conditions of the poor man's life which he always shows.

But the crown of all this kindness is found in the beautiful tenth verse: "When thou dost lend thy neighbour any manner of loan, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge thou shalt stand without, and the man to whom thou dost lend shall bring forth the pledge without unto thee." Not only does Yahweh care for external and physical pain, He sympathises with those deeper wrongs and pains which may hurt a man's feelings. If a pledge to satisfy the lender had to be given, scruples of delicacy on the part of the borrower would appear to the "practical" man, as he would call himself, contemptibly misplaced. If the man's feelings were so very superfine, why did he borrow? But the author of Deuteronomy knew the heart of God better. With the fine tact of a man of God, he knew how even the well-meaning rich man's amused contempt for the poor man's few household treasures, would cut like a whip, and he knew that Yahweh, who was "very pitiful and of tender mercy," would desire no son of Israel to be exposed to it. He knew, too, how human greed might dispose the lender to seize upon the thing of greatest value in the poor house, whether its price was in excess of the loan or not. Finally, he knew how it deteriorates the poor to be dealt with in an unceremonious, tactless way even by the benevolent. And in the name and with the authority of God he forbids it. The poor man's home, the home of the man whom we desire to help especially, is to be sacred. In our dealing with him of all men the finest courtesy is to be brought

into play. Just because he needs our help, we are to stand on points of ceremony with him, which we might dispense with in dealing with friends and equals. "Thou shalt stand without," unless he asks thee to enter; and thou shalt show thereby, in a deeper way than any gifts or loans can show, that the fraternal tie is acknowledged and reverenced.

In two other precepts the same delicate regard for the finer feelings finds expression. In the fifth verse it is commanded that "When a man taketh a new wife, he shall not go out in the host, neither shall he be charged with any business: he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer his wife that he hath taken." The strangeness and loneliness which everywhere make themselves felt as a formidable drawback to a young wife's joy, and which in a polygamous family, where jealousies are bitter, must often have reached the point of being intolerable, are provided for. In chap. xxv. 1-3 again, which deals with the punishment of criminals by beating, it is provided that in no case shall the number of blows exceed forty, and that they shall be given in the presence of the judge. This in itself was a measure of humanity, but the reason given for the direction is greatly more humane. "Forty stripes he may give him," says ver. 3; "he shall not exceed; lest, if he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee." Even in the case of the criminal care is to be taken that he be not made an object of contempt. Punishment has gone beyond its true aim when it makes a man seem vile unto his neighbours by attacking his dignity as a man; for that should be inalienable even in a criminal. A man may have all his material wants satisfied, and yet be sorely vexed and injured. God sympathises with these hurts of the soul, and defends His people against them.

After the lovingkindness of these commands, it seems

almost needless to say that the smaller social wrongs which men may inflict upon each other are sternly forbidden. Often, the rich from want of thought about the life of the poor carelessly do them wrong. Such a case is that dealt within chap. xxiv. 14 f.: "Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers (*gerim*) that are in thy land within thy gates: in his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto Yahweh, and it be sin unto thee." The same command is given in Lev. xix. 13, and Dillmann is probably right in regarding this as a Deuteronomic repetition of that, since there the precept forms part of a pentade of commands dealing with similar things, while here it stands alone. From early times, therefore, Yahweh had revealed Himself as considering the poor and the necessities of their position. Further, the poor man or the wayfarer was permitted to satisfy his hunger by taking fruit or grain in his hands as he passed through the fields. No one was to die of starvation if the fields were "yielding meat." Last of all, estrangement between brethren, *i.e.* all Israelites, was not to free them from duties of neighbourly love. If a man find a stray ox or sheep or ass, or a garment or any other lost thing, he is not to leave it where he finds it. He is to restore it to the owner; and if the owner is unknown or too far off, the finder is to keep that which he has found till it is inquired after. Then if he see his brother's, *i.e.* his neighbour's, ass or ox fallen by the way, he must not pass by, but must help the owner to set it on its feet again. That an estranged "brother" was especially in view is shown by the fact that in the parallel passage (Exod. xxiii. 4) "thine enemy's ox" and "the ass of him that hateth thee" are mentioned.

Now, we have called these precepts and provisions the flower and blossom of the Deuteronomic legislation, because they reveal in their greatest perfection that sympathy with the commonest and the innermost cares of men which is the moving impulse of it all. But they reveal more than that. They show that already in those far-off days the secret of God's love to man had been made known. Its universality so far as Israel was concerned, its penetrative sympathy, its quality of regarding no human interest as outside its scope, its superhuman impartiality—all are here. They are not of course present in their full sweep and power, as Christ made them known. Outside of Israel there were the Gentiles, who had a share only in the "uncovenanted mercies" of God; and even among the chosen people there were the slaves and the strangers, who had a comparatively insecure relation to Him. Further, the thought of the self-sacrifice of God, though soon to have its dawning in the later chapters of Isaiah, was not as yet an appreciable element in the Israelite theology. Nevertheless the passages we have been considering throw a light upon social duty, as seen by this inspired servant of God, which puts to shame the state of the Christian mind on these subjects even now.

The great principles underlying right relations between men of different social status are, according to these precepts, courtesy and consideration. Now it is precisely the want of these which lies at the root of the bitterness which is so alarming a symptom of our social state at present. There is not, we are willing to believe, much of intentional, deliberate oppression exercised by the strong upon the weak. The injustice that is done is probably inherent in the present social system, for the character of which no one living is responsible. But one reason why reform comes so slowly, and why patience till it can come dies out among the masses of men, is that the employing

classes, and those who have inherited privileges, often convey to those they employ the impression that they are beyond the pale of the courtesies which are recognised as binding between men of the same class. Often without intending it, their manner when they are approached by those they employ, their short and half-aggrieved replies, reveal to the latter that they are regarded much more as parts of the machinery, than as men who might naturally be expected to claim, and who have a right to, the recognition of their rights as men.

Of course there are excuses. There is the long tradition of subordination to arbitrary power, from which none in earlier ages of the world have been free. There is the impatience with which a governing and organising mind listens to grievances which it sees either to be inevitable under the circumstances, or to be compensated by some corresponding privilege, which stands or falls with the thing complained of. And then there is the absence of outlook, which is the foible of the directing mind. It is set to rule and make successful a large and intricate business under given circumstances. The more effective such a mind is for practical purposes, the more thoroughly will it limit itself to working out the problem committed to it. When grievances have to be dealt with which have their root in the present circumstances, and which imply changes more or less radical in his fixed point if they are to be redressed, it is hard for the employer to persuade himself that his employees are not merely crying for the moon. If he think so, he will probably say so; and working men go away from such interviews with the feeling that it is vain to expect from employers any sympathy for their aspirations towards a better social state, which yet they cannot give up without a slur upon their manhood.

But though these are excuses for the attitude we have

been describing, there can be no question that the fine and delicate courtesy which Deuteronomy prescribes is indispensable in order to avert class hostility. Courtesy cannot, of course, change our social state, and where it works badly evils that produce friction will remain. But the first condition of a successful solution of our difficulties is, that evil tempers should as far as possible be banished, and for that purpose courtesy even under provocation is the one sovereign remedy. For it means that you convey to your neighbour that you consider him in all essentials your equal. It means, too, that you are willing to recognise his rights and to respect them. Though power may be on your side, and weakness on his, that will only make it more incumbent upon you to show that mere external circumstances cannot impair your reverence for him as man. If that be sincerely felt, it opens a way, otherwise absolutely closed, to mutual confidence and mutual understanding. These once established, light on all parts of the social problem (which, be it remembered, employers and employed must solve together if it is to be solved at all) will break in upon the minds of both classes. In spite of the diversity of their immediate interests, the ultimate interest of all is the same. If contempt and suspicion were excluded, eyes which are now holden would be opened, and a common effort to reach a social state in which all men shall have the opportunity of living lives worthy of men would become possible. If all would learn to treat those of other classes with the courtesy which they constantly show to those of their own, a great step in the right direction would be taken. Men overlook much and forgive much to their fellows when these recognise their equality, and show that they attach importance to having good relations with them.

But much more is to be aimed at than that. The esteem for man as man has great conquests yet to make

before even the Deuteronomic courtesy becomes common. But if these nobler manners are to come in, then the motives suggested by Deuteronomy will have to be made effective for our day. What these were it is not difficult to see. They all had their source in the author's own relations and the relations of his people to God. Each of his brethren of the chosen people was a friend of Yahweh. There was no difference between Israelite men before Him. He had brought them all, the poor and the weak, as well as the rich and the strong, out of the house of bondage; He had guided them all through the wilderness, and had appointed each household a place in His land where full communion with Him was to be had. He had thought many thoughts about them, had given them laws and statutes dictated by loving insight, so as to fill their life with the consciousness that Yahweh loved them, condescended to them, and even allowed Himself to be made to serve by their sins. Whatever else they might be, they were friends of God, and had a right to respect on that ground. And for us who are Christians all these motives have been intensified and raised to a higher power. It is not lawful for us to call any man common or unclean. It is not lawful to overwhelm and bear down the minds of others by sheer energy and power. Those "for whom Christ died" are not to be dealt with save on the worthy plane of moral and spiritual conviction. That is the law of Christ; and so long as it is broken in our labour troubles by contemptuous refusal of conference when it can be granted without compromising principle, or by slighting references to labour leaders and a refusal to meet them, when leaders of another class would be courteously met, so long will the bitterness which inevitably springs up trouble us.

It is not, however, to be supposed that only the rich can

sin in this respect. The labour organisations are becoming in many places, the stronger,[1] and so far they have learned the law of courtesy no better than their opponents. Opprobrious epithets and injurious suspicions and accusations are the stock-in-trade of some who lead the labour cause. That is as unworthy in them as it would be in others; it is not only a crime, but a blunder.

But the practice of courtesy does not end with itself. It opens the way for that consideration of the circumstances of the poor which we have found so conspicuous in Deuteronomy. As we have seen, Yahweh's precepts contemplate with the nicest care the unavoidable necessities of the poor man's life. So He stirs us to endeavour to realise the conditions of our poorer brethren, and by doing so to avoid the blunders which well-meaning people make by assuming that the conditions of their own life are the norm. There are vast varieties of circumstance in the world; and from lack of consideration those more favourably situated excite envies and hatreds the bitterness of which they cannot conceive, by simply taking it for granted that every one has the same opportunities for recreation, the same possibilities of rest. To realise clearly what life and death mean to the toiling millions of men; to see that matters which are small to those who live the materially larger and freer life of the class above them are of vital moment to the poor; to consider and allow for all such things in their dealings with them,—this is the teaching of Deuteronomy. Hence the command to pay the labourer his wages in the same day. The heart of man responds when this note is struck. In nothing is the story of Gautama the Buddha more true to the best instincts of humanity than in this, that it represents him as making his great renunciation through coming into intimate

[1] Especially in some of the Southern Colonies in one of which this exposition is written.

contact with the pain and misery of ordinary life.[1] That gave him insight, and insight wrought sympathy, and sympathy transformed him from being a petty prince of Northern India into the consoler and helper of millions in all Eastern lands. Even hopeless pessimism, when born of sympathy, has an immense consoling power. Much more should the inextinguishable hope given by Christ, combined as it is with the same sympathetic insight, console men and uplift them.

But the sixteenth verse of chap. xxiii. reminds us that in that ancient Deuteronomic world there were sad limitations to these lofty sympathies and hopes. If intensively Deuteronomy almost reaches the Gospel, extensively it shows the whole difference between Judaism at its best and Christianity. Below the world of free-born members of the Israelite community, to whom the precepts we have hitherto been considering alone apply, there was the class of slaves, who in many respects lay beyond the region of the finer charities. The origin of slavery we need not discuss. It was a quite universal feature in all ancient communities, and was doubtless a step upwards from the custom of destroying all prisoners taken in war. Among the Hebrews it had always been customary; but in historic times it was not among them the all-important matter it was in Greek and Roman polity. Had it been so, it would have been impossible to discuss the economic ideals of Israel without taking this social feature into consideration first. But slaves were comparatively few in Israel, and the slave trade can never have been extensive, since no slave markets are mentioned in the Old Testament. Moreover the social state of the country made owners of slaves share in the slaves' work, and that of itself prevented the growth of the worst abuses. But the most

[1] *Buddhism*, by T. W. Rhys Davids p. 29.

powerful element in making the lot of the slave tolerable was undoubtedly the just and pitiful character of the Israelite religion.

The fundamental position with regard to him was, however, the common one: he was the property of his master. He could be sold, pledged, given away as a present, and inherited, and could even be sold to foreigners. But a female slave, if taken as a subordinate wife, could not be sold, but only freed if she ceased to occupy that position. Exclusive of the Canaanites, subject to forced labour, and the Nethinim, the servants of the Sanctuary, who occupied much the same place as the *servi publici* in Rome, there were two classes of slaves, non-Israelites and Israelites. The ways in which a non-Israelite slave could come into Israelite hands were just what they were elsewhere. They might be prisoners of war, they might be purchased from travelling merchants, they might voluntarily have sold themselves from poverty in a strange land, or might have been sold for debt, and finally they might be children born of slaves. Their lot was of course the hardest. Yet even they were not so entirely unprotected by the law as slaves were among Greeks and Romans. They were recognised as men, having certain general human rights. The master had no right to kill; and if he maimed his slave he had to give him his freedom, according to the oldest law (Exod. xvi. 20 f.). The law regarding the killing of a slave has often been quoted as singularly harsh, especially that clause which says that if a slave when fatally smitten lives for some days after the blow, his death shall not be avenged, "for he is his (the master's) money." But it ought, notwithstanding the harshness of the expression, to be judged quite otherwise. The fact that death was not immediate was taken to indicate that death was not intended, and consequently the loss of the slave was

thought a sufficient punishment. But the prohibition of the deliberate murder of a slave was a humane provision which could not be paralleled in the Græco-Roman world. Moreover these laws would not seem to have been widely called into action. The humane spirit became so general in Israel that slaves were generally well treated. In Prov. xxix. 21 over-indulgence to a slave is deprecated, as if it were a common error; and during the whole history there is no mention of evils resulting from cruel treatment of slaves, much less any record of servile insurrection. Nor is there very frequent mention even of runaway slaves. On the other hand, we read of slaves who were stewards of their masters' houses; others probably were entrusted with the charge of the education of children.

In Deuteronomy we find, as we should expect, that the movement towards humanity in dealing with slaves is greatly furthered. In chap. xxi. 10 ff. the hardship of a woman's lot when she was taken captive in war is mitigated with sympathetic insight. To modern women of the Western world the lot of such an one seems so dreadful that no mitigation of it can make any difference. The current teaching among even religious men is that rather than submit to it a woman is justified in suicide. But in antiquity the personality of woman was undeveloped, the chances of life constantly passed her from one master to another, and things intolerable now were tolerable then. Making even these allowances, however, if we look at the law of the Old Testament as being in all its provisions and *ab initio* Divine, it seems impossible to praise it. A law which graciously permitted a captive woman to mourn for her people for a month, and only then allowed her captor to marry her, but if he wished afterwards to get rid of her provided that he should not sell her, but should let her go whither she would, cannot be said to be

in itself compassionate. But, if the customary law of the Israelite tribes, restrained and purified by the higher spirit, be regarded as the basis of Old Testament legislation, then the leaven of religion and humanity can be seen working nobly, and in a manner worthy of revelation, even in such cases as these. Long after the Christian era we see what the ordinary fate of a captive woman was, in the conduct of Khalid the "sword of the Lord," one of the first great Mohammedan soldiers. When he had captured Malik ibn Noweira, who had resisted Islam, along with his wife, he gave orders which led to Malik's death, and the same night he married his widow.[1] Shortly afterwards, at the battle of Yemama, he demanded the daughter of his captive Mojda, and married her, as the Caliph wrote in reproof, "whilst the ground beneath the nuptial couch was yet moistened with the blood of twelve hundred." Horrors like these Deuteronomy forbids. The frenzied moments of a captive's first grief are respected, and some tenderness is shown to woman in a world where her lot at its best had always in it possibilities which cannot now be even thought of with equanimity. The same steady pressure to a nobler form of life is likewise seen in the Deuteronomic law dealing with the case of a foreign slave who had taken refuge in Israel (Deut. xxiii. 15 f.). In the words, "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the slave which is escaped from his master unto thee; he shall dwell with thee, in the midst of thee, in the place which he shall choose within one of thy gates, where it liketh him best; thou shalt not oppress him," we have, thus early, the same legislation which it is the peculiar boast of England to have introduced into the modern world. "Slaves cannot breathe in England," and the moment they touch British soil in any part of the

[1] Sir W. Muir, *Caliphate*, pp. 26 and 33.

world they are free. This was the case with the land of Israel according to the Deuteronomic conception of what it ought to be.

But the highest points of privilege come to the non-Israelite slave in a way which disturbs the modern conscience, for they came by means of compulsion in religion. In contrast to the day labourer and the "Toshab" or sojourner, the slave *must* be of his master's religion. For a heathen, however, that was not a difficulty. His gods were gods of his land; and when he left his land and was carried into a foreign country, he had no scruple about worshipping the god of the new land. A typical case of this is found in the narrative 2 Kings xvii., where the immigrants whom the king of Assyria had settled in Samaria after Israel had been carried captive besought him to send some one to teach them how to worship Yahweh. This adoption of the master's religion secured equality of slave and free to a degree which could not otherwise have been attained, and brought the slaves fully within the humanity of the Hebrew law. It gave them the Sabbath (chap. v. 14). It gave a full share in all the religious festivals and a part in the sacrificial feasts (Deut. xii. 12 and xvi. 11, 14). Such slaves were, in fact, fully adopted into the family of God, and became brethren, poorer and more unfortunate, but still brethren of their masters. They had indeed no claim to freedom, as Israelite slaves had; they were slaves in perpetuity. But their slavery was of a kind that did not degrade them beneath the condition of man.

With regard to Israelite slaves the beneficence of the law was naturally still greater. The fullest statement in regard to them is found, not in Deuteronomy, but in Lev. xxv. 39-46; but in the main we may suppose that in its larger outlines the distinction between Israelite and non-Israelite slaves there insisted on was always

acknowledged. They were not to be thrust down into the lowest depth of slavery, and they were not to be set to the lowest kinds of labour, rather to that which hired labourers were wont to do, because they were of the children of Israel, of the nation whom Yahweh had brought out of the house of bondage. Further, they had a right to emancipation every seventh year, that is to say, whenever they had served six full years they could claim freedom in the seventh. Their original property was meant to be restored to them in the Sabbatic year, and so their degradation could last only for a very limited time. In Exod. xxi. 2 ff. we find the original provisions concerning the Israelite slave. Deuteronomy simply took these up, and modified them in certain respects. It extends all that Exodus says of the slave to the female slave also, and, in its care for and understanding of the difficulties of the poor, enacts that a slave when set free shall receive a fresh start in life from the cattle, the barn, and the winepress of the former owner. But this anticipation of discharged prisoners' aid societies was too high a demand upon a faithless generation. Even Jeremiah could not get it carried out; and the probability is that none but the most spiritually minded of the Jews ever regarded it as binding law.

The love which love of Yahweh inspired spread still more widely. It took in not only the poor and the slave, but it took account also of the lower animals. It has been often made a reproach to Christianity that it makes no such appeal on behalf of the lower creation as Buddhism does. But that reproach (like the kindred one brought by J. S. Mill, that in comparison with the Qur'an the New Testament is defective in not pressing civil duty) is tenable only if the New Testament be absolutely severed from the Old. Taken as the completion of the moral and religious development begun in Israel, Christianity

takes up into itself all the experience, and all the teaching by example, which the Old Testament contains. It does not repeat it, because to the first Christians the Old Testament was the Divinely inspired guide. It was at first their whole Bible, and to take the New Testament by itself as an independent product is to mutilate both the Old and the New. When the Old Testament, therefore, enjoins kindness to animals we may set down all that it prescribes to the credit of Christianity. So much, at least, the latter must be held to teach; and if we consider the spirit as well as the letter of this law, there is no exaggeration in saying that it covers all the ground. Here, as in the case of slaves and the poor, the fundamental reason for kindness is relation to God. In the Yahwist's narrative in Gen. ii. all creatures are formed by God, and God Himself shows kindness to them. Indeed in passages like Psalm xxxvi. 7, as Cheyne well remarks, there is an implication "that morally speaking there is no complete break of continuity in the scale of sentient life," and that, as is seen by passages like Jer. xxi. 6, and Isa. iv. 11, the mild domesticated animals "are in fact regarded as a part of the human community." In the Decalogue the animals that labour with and for man have their share in the Sabbath rest, and the produce of the fields during the Sabbatic year (Exod. xxiii. 11; Lev. xxv. 7) is to be for them as well as for the poor. That they were mere machines of flesh and blood, to be driven till they were worn out, and were then to be cast aside, seems never to have occurred to the Israelite mind. These helpful creatures had made a covenant with man, and had a share in the consideration which the sons of Israel were taught to have for one another. In reaching that attainment Israel had reached the only effective ground for dealing with animals, as Cheyne says, "without inhumanity and without sentimentalism" The individual

prescriptions of Deuteronomy emphasise and bring down these principles into the practical life. It is probable that the precept not to seethe a kid in its mother's milk (Deut. xiv. 21) was, in part at least, a law of kindness, founded upon a reverential feeling for the parental relationship even in this lower sphere. The command in Deut. xxii. 6 is certainly so. We read there: "If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young; thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, but the young thou mayest take unto thyself; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days." Evidently the ground of sympathy here is the existence and the sacredness of the parental relationship. The mother bird is sacred as a mother; and length of days is promised to those who regard the sanctity of motherhood in this sphere, as it is promised to those who observe the fifth commandment of the Decalogue. Thus intimately the lower creation is drawn into the human sphere.

The only other precepts under this head are that a fallen animal is always to be lifted. (Deut. xxii. 4), and the ox is not to be muzzled when it is treading out the corn (Deut. xxv. 4). These were ordinary prescriptions of humanity, but they too rest upon the sympathetic identification of the sufferings and wants of all sentient beings with those of mankind. It may be objected, however, that St. Paul denies that the last precept really was due to pity for the oxen. In 1 Cor. ix. 9, referring to it, he says, "Is it for the oxen that God careth, or saith He it altogether for our sake? Yea, for our sake it was written." But there is no real contradiction here. It is quite impossible that a devout Jew like St. Paul did not believe that God's "tender mercies are over all His

works" (Psalm cxlv. 9). He would have been false to all his training had he not accepted that as a fundamental axiom. His apparent denial does not refer at all to the historic fact that the precept *was* given because of God's care for oxen. It only signifies that, when taken in its highest sense, it was meant to form character in *men*. St. Paul argues, as Alford says, "that not the oxen, but those for whom the law was given, were its objects. Every duty of *humanity* has for its ultimate ground, not the mere welfare of the animal concerned, but its welfare in that system of which man is the head, and therefore man's welfare." In fact St. Paul understood the Old Testament as we have seen it demands to be understood, and places the duty of kindness to animals in its right relation to man.

In all relations, therefore, Deuteronomy insists that life's main principle shall be love illumined by sympathy. Beginning with God and giving man's unquiet heart a firm anchorage there, it commands that all creatures about us shall be embraced in the same sympathising tenderness. It forbids us to look upon any of them as mere instruments for our use, for all of them have ends of their own in the loving thought of God. God is for it the great unifying, harmonising power in the world, and from a right conception of Him all right living flows. If the New Testament asks with wonder how a man who loves not his brother whom he hath seen can love God whom he hath not seen, the Old Testament teaches with equal emphasis the complementary truth that he who loves not God whom he hath not seen will never love as he ought his brother whom he hath seen. For to it Yahweh is the first and last word; and all the growth in kindness, gentleness, consideration, and goodness which can be traced in the revelation given to Israel, has its source in a conception of the Divine character which from the first was spiritual, and was moreover unique in the world.

CHAPTER XXIV

MOSES' FAREWELL SPEECHES

DEUT. iv. 1-40, xxvii.—xxx.

WITH the twenty-sixth chapter the entirely homogeneous central portion of the Book of Deuteronomy ends, and it concludes it most worthily. It prescribes two ceremonies which are meant to give solemn expression to the feeling of thankfulness which the love of God, manifested in so many laws and precepts, covering the commonest details of life, should have made the predominant feeling. The first is the utterance of what we have called the "liturgy of gratitude" at the time of the feast of firstfruits; and the second is the solemn dedication of the third year's tithe to the poor and the fatherless, and the disclaimer of any misuse of it. Further notice of either after what has already been said in reference to them would be superfluous. The closing verses (16-19) of the chapter are a solemn reminder that all these transactions with God had bound the people to Yahweh in a covenant. "Thou hast avouched Yahweh this day to be thy God" and, "Yahweh hath avouched thee this day to be a peculiar people (*'am segūllāh*) unto Himself." By this they were bound to keep Yahweh's statutes and judgments, and do them with all their heart and with all their soul, while He, on His part, undertakes on these terms to set them "high above all nations which He hath made in praise, and in name, and in honour," and to make them a holy people unto Himself.

But the original Deuteronomy as read to King Josiah cannot have ended with chapter xxvi., for the thing that awed him most was the threat of evil and desolation which were to follow the non-observance of this covenant. Now though there are indications of such dangers in the first twenty-six chapters of Deuteronomy, yet threats are not, so far, a prominent part of this book. The book as read must consequently have contained some additional chapters, which, in part at least, must have contained threats. Now this is what we have in our Biblical Deuteronomy. But in chapters xxvii. and xxviii. there are reduplications which can hardly have formed part of the original author's work. An examination of these has led every one who admits composite authorship in the Pentateuch to see that from chapter xxvii. onwards the original work has been broken up and dovetailed again with the works of JE and P; so that component parts of the first four books of the Hexateuch appear along with elements which the author of Deuteronomy has supplied. We have, in fact, before us, from this point, the work of the editor who fitted Deuteronomy into the framework of the Pentateuch; and it is of importance, from an expository point of view even, to endeavour to restore Deuteronomy to its original form, and to follow out the traces of it that are left.

As we have said, we must look for the threats and promises which undoubtedly formed part of it. These are contained in chapters xxvii. and xxviii. But a careful reader will feel at once that chapter xxvii. disturbs the connection, and that xxviii. should follow xxvi. In chapter xxvii., vv. 9 and 10 alone seem necessary to give a transition to chapter xxviii.; and if all the rest were omitted we should have exactly what the narrative in Kings would lead us to expect, a coherent, natural sequence of blessings and curses, which should follow

faithfulness to the covenant, or unfaithfulness. The rest of chapter xxvii. is not consistent either with itself or with Josh. viii. 30, where the accomplishment of that which is commanded here is recorded. In vv. 1-3 Moses and the elders command the people to set up great stones and plaister them with plaister and write upon them all the words of this law, on the day when they shall pass over Jordan, that they may go in unto the land. In ver. 4 it is said that these stones are to be set up in Mount Ebal, and there an altar of unhewn stones is to be built, and sacrifices offered, "and thou shalt write upon the stones very plainly." From the position of this last clause and the mention of Mount Ebal, the course of events would be quite different from that which vv. 1-3 suggest. The stones were, according to the verses 4 ff., to be set up in Mount Ebal; out of these an altar of unhewn stones was to be built; and on them the law was to be inscribed, and this is what Joshua says was done. But if we take all the verses, 1-8, together, we can reconcile them only by the hypothesis that the stones were set up as soon as Jordan was crossed, plaistered, and inscribed with the law; that afterwards they were removed to Mount Ebal and built into an altar "of unhewn stone," upon which sacrifices were offered. But that surely is in the highest degree improbable; and since we know that in other cases two narratives have been combined in the sacred text, that would seem the most probable solution here. Verses 4-8 will in that case be a later insertion, probably from J. In the same connection vv. 15-26 contain a list of crimes which are visited with a curse and no blessings; this cannot be the proclamation of blessing and cursing which is here required. Further, this list must be by a different author, for it affixes curses to some crimes which are not mentioned in Deuteronomy, and omits such sins as idolatry, which are continually

mentioned there. This section must consequently have been inserted here by some later hand. It must probably have been later even than the time of the writer of Josh. viii. 33 ff., since the arrangement as reported there differs from what is prescribed here. Moreover, as there is nothing new in these sections, and all they say is repeated substantially in chapter xxviii., we may give our attention wholly to chapter xxviii. 1-68, as being the original proclamation of blessing and curse.

But other entanglements follow. Chapters xxix. and xxx. manifestly contained an adieu on the part of Moses, who turns finally to the people with an affecting and solemn speech of farewell. That appears in chapters xxix. and xxx. But for many reasons it is impossible to believe that these chapters as they stand are the original speech of Deuteronomy.[1] The language is in large part different, and there are references to the Book of the Law as being already written out (chap. xxix. 19 f. 26, and chap. xxx. 10). It is probably therefore an editor's rewriting of the original speech, and from the fact that "it contains many points of contact with Jeremiah in thoughts and words," it is probably to be dated in the Exile. But there is another noticeable thing in connection with it. It has a remarkable resemblance in these and other respects to chapter iv. 1-40. That passage can hardly have originally followed chapters i.—iii., if as is most probable these were at first an historic introduction to Deuteronomy. The hortative character of iv. 1-40 shows that it must have been placed where it is by a reviser. But the language, though not altogether that of Deuteronomy, is like it, and the thought is also Deuteronomic. Probably the passage must have been transferred from some other part of Deuteronomy and

[1] Cf. Dillmann, *Deuteronomy*, pp. 178 ff.

adapted by the editor. A clue to its true place may perhaps be found in ver. 8, where "all this law" is spoken of as if it were already given, and in ver. 5, where we read, "Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments." These passages imply that the law of Deuteronomy had been given, and in that case chapter iv. must belong to a closing speech. We probably shall not be in error, therefore, in thinking that chapters. iv. 1-40 and xxix. and xxx. are all founded on an original farewell speech which stood in Deuteronomy after the blessing and the curse.

But it may be asked, if that be so, why did an editor make these changes? The answer is to be found in two passages in chapters xxxi. and xxxii. which cannot be harmonised as they stand. In xxxi. 19 we are told that Yahweh commanded Moses to write "this song" and teach it to the children of Israel, "that this song may be a witness for Me against the children of Israel," and ver. 22, "So Moses wrote this song." But in vv. 28 f. we read that "Moses said, Assemble unto me all the elders of the tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to witness against them." Obviously "these words" are different from "this song," and are meant for a different purpose. The same ambiguity occurs at the end of the song in vv. 44 ff., where we first read of Moses ending "this song," and in the next verse we read, "And Moses made an end of speaking all these words to all Israel." Now what has become of "*these words*"? In all probability they were the substance of chapters iv. and xxix. and xxx., and were separated and amplified, because the editor who fitted Deuteronomy into the Pentateuch took over the song in chapter xxxii., as well as those passages of xxxi. and xxxii. that speak of this song, from JE. He accepted them as a fitting conclusion for the career of Moses, and transferred the original speech, which we suppose

to have been the last great utterance of the orignal Deuteronomy, putting the main part of it immediately before the song, but taking parts out of it to form a hortatory ending (such as the other Moses' speeches have) to that first one which he had formed out of the historic introduction. This may seem a very complicated process and an unlikely one; but after the foundation had been built by Dillmann, Westphal has elaborated the whole matter with such luminous force that it seems hardly possible to doubt that the facts can be accounted for only in this way. By piecing together iv., xxx., and xxxi. he produces a speech so thoroughly coherent and consistent that the mere reading of it becomes the most cogent proof of the substantial truth of his argument.[1]

An analysis of it will show this. (1) There is the introduction; up till now the people have understood neither the commands nor the love of Yahweh (xxix. 1-9). (2) There is the explanation of the Covenant (xxix. 10-15); (3) A command to observe the Covenant (iv. 1, 2); (4) Warning against individual transgression, which will be punished by the destruction of the rebel (xxix. 16-21, iv. 3, 4); (5) Warning against collective transgression, which will be punished by the ruin of the people (iv. 5-26). The author, from this point regarding the transgression as an accomplished fact, announces: (6) The dispersion and exile of the people (iv. 27, 28); (7) The impression produced on future generations by the horror of this dispersion (xxix. 22-28); (8) The conversion of the exiles to God (iv. 30, 31); (9) Their return to the land of their fathers xxx. (1-10). (10) In conclusion, it is stated that

[1] *Le Deuteronome* (Toulouse, 1891), pp. 62-75. The order in which he disposes of the verses is as follows: Deut. xxxi. 24-29, xxix. 1-15, iv. 1, 2, xxix. 16-21, iv. 3-30, xxix. 22-28, iv. 30, 31, xxx. 1-10, iv. 32-40, xxx. 11-20, xxxii. 45-47. If before this we place xxxi. 1-13, we shall probably have the original sequence fully restored.

the power of Yahweh to sustain the faith of His people and to save them is guaranteed by the past (iv. 32-40); and there is no reason therefore that the people should shrink from obeying the commandment prescribed to them. It is a matter of will. Life and death are before them; let them choose (xxx. 11-20).

The analysis of the remaining chapters is not difficult. Chapter xxxi., vv. 14-23 and 30, form the introduction to the song, chapter xxxii., vv. 1-43, just as ver. 44 is the conclusion of it. Both introduction and song are extracted probably from J and E. Verses 48-52 are after P. Then follows the blessing of Moses, chapter xxxiii. Finally, chapter xxxiv. contains an account of Moses' death and a final eulogy of him, in which all the sources JE, P, and D have been called into requisition. The threefold cord which runs through the other books of the Pentateuch was untwisted to receive Deuteronomy, and has been re-twisted so as to bind the Pentateuch into one coherent whole. That is the result of the microscopic examination which the text as it stands has undergone, and we may pretty certainly accept it as correct. But we should not lose sight of the fact that, as the book is now arranged, it has a notable coherence of its own, and the impression of unity which it conveys is in itself a result of great literary skill. Not only has the editor combined Deuteronomy into the other narratives most successfully, but he has done so not only without falsifying, but so as to confirm and enhance the impression which the original book was meant to convey.

We turn now to the substance of the two speeches—the proclamation of the blessing and the curse, and the great farewell address. As we have seen, the first is contained in chapter xxviii. If any evidence were now needed that this chapter was written later than the Mosaic time, it might be found in the space given to the curses, and the

much heavier emphasis laid upon them than upon the blessings. Not that Moses might not have prophetically foretold Israel's disregard of warnings. But if the heights to which Israel was actually to rise had been before the author's mind as still future, instead of being wrapped in the mists of the past, he could not but have dwelt more equally upon both sides of the picture. Whatever supernatural gifts a prophet might have, he was still and in all things a man. He was subject to moods like others, and the determination of these depended upon his surroundings. He was not kept by the power of God beyond the shadows which the clouds in his sky might cast; and we may safely say that if the curses which are to follow disobedience are elaborated and dwelt upon much more than the blessings which are to reward obedience, it is because the author lived at a time of unfaithfulness and revolt. Obviously his contemporaries were going far in the evil way, and he warns them with intense and eager earnestness against the dangers they are so recklessly incurring.

But after all we have seen of the spirituality of the Deuteronomic teaching, and its insistence upon love as the true bond between men and God and the true motive to all right action, it is perhaps disappointing to some to find how entirely these promises and threats have their centre in the material world. Probably nowhere else will the truth of Bacon's famous saying that "Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament" be more conspicuously seen than here. If Israel be faithful she is promised productivity, riches, success in war. Even when it is promised that she shall be established by Yahweh as a holy people unto Himself, the meaning seems to be that the people shall be separated from others by these earthly favours, rather than that they shall have the moral and spiritual qualities which the word "holy" now connotes. Other

nations shall fear Israel because of the Divine favour. Israel shall be raised above them all. If it become unfaithful, on the other hand, it is to be visited with pestilence, consumption, fever, inflammation, sword, blasting, mildew. The earth is to be iron beneath them, and the heaven above them brass. Instead of rain they are to have dust; they are to be visited with more than Egyptian plagues. Their minds are to refuse to serve them; they are to be defeated in war; their country is to be overrun by marauders; their wives and children, their cattle and their crops, are to fall into the enemy's hands. Locusts and all known pests are to fall upon their fields; and they themselves are to be carried away captive, after having endured the worst horrors of siege, and been compelled by hunger to devour their own children. And in exile they shall be an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word, and shall be ruled by oppressive aliens. Worst of all, they shall there lose hope in God and "shall serve other gods, even wood and stone." Their lives shall hang in doubt before them. In the morning they shall say, "Would God it were evening," and at even they shall say, "Would God it were morning." All the deliverance Yahweh had wrought for them by bringing them out of Egypt would be undone, and once more they should go back into Egyptian bondage.

All that is materialistic enough; but there is no need to make apology for Deuteronomy, nevertheless. The prophet has taught the higher law; he has rooted all human duty, both to God and man, in love to God, and now he tries to enlist man's natural fear and hope as allies of his highest principle. How justifiable that is we have already seen in Chapter XII., pp. 231 ff.

But a more serious question is raised when it is asked, does Nature, in definite sober truth, lend itself, in the manner implied throughout this chapter, to the support of religious and moral fidelity? At a time when imagina-

tive literature is largely devoting itself to an angry or querulous denial of any righteous force working for the unfortunate and the faithful,[1] there can be no question what the popular answer to such a question would be. But from the ranks of literature itself we may summon testimony on the other side. Mr. Hall Caine, in his address at the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution, maintains in a wider and more general way the essence of the Deuteronomic thesis when he says, "I count him the greatest genius who touches the magnetic and Divine chord in humanity which is always waiting to vibrate to the sublime hope of recompense; I count him the greatest man who teaches men that the world is ruled in righteousness." And his justification of that position is too admirable not to be quoted: "Life is made up of a multitude of fragments, a sea of many currents, often coming into collision and throwing up breakers. We look around and see wrong-doing victorious, and right-doing in the dust; the evil man growing rich and dying in his bed, the good man becoming poor and dying in the street; and our hearts sink and we say, What is God doing after all in this world of His children? But our days are few, our view is limited, we cannot watch the event long enough to see the end which Providence sees." "It is the very province of imaginative genius," he goes on to say, "to see that which the common mind cannot see, to offer to it at least suggestions of how these triumphs of unrighteousness may be accounted for in accordance with the law that righteousness rules in the world." We would go further. It is one of the main purposes of inspiration to go beyond even imaginative genius, to point out in history not only how right may perhaps ultimately triumph, but how it has been in reality

[1] Cf. Recent fiction, *e.g. The African Farm, Tess of the D'Urbevilles, The Heavenly Twins.*

and must be victorious. For it will not do to shut off the world of material things from the working of this great and universal law. Owing to the narrow fanaticism of science, modern men have become sceptical, not only of miracle, but even of the fundamental truth that righteousness is profitable for the life that now is, that in following righteousness men are co-operating with the deepest law of the universe. But it remains a truth for all that. It is written deep in the heart of man; and in more wavering lines perhaps, but still most legibly, it is written on the face of things. With the limitations of his time and place, this is what the Deuteronomist preaches. Doubtless he has not faced, as Job does, the whole of the problem; still less has he attained to the final insight exhibited in the New Testament, that temporal gifts may be curses in disguise, that the highest region of recompense is in the eternal life, in the domain of things which are invisible but eternal. He does not yet *know*, though he has perhaps a presentiment of it, that being completely stripped of all earthly good may be the path to the highest victory—the victory which makes men more than conquerors through Christ. Nevertheless he is, making these allowances, right, and the moderns are wrong. In many ways obedience to spiritual inspirations does bring worldly prosperity. The absence of moral and spiritual faithfulness does affect even the fruitfulness of the soil, the fecundity of animals, the prevalence of disease, the stability of ordered life and success in war. This was visible to the ancient world generally in a dim way; but by the inspired men of the Old Covenant it was clearly seen, for they were enlightened for the very purpose of seeing the hand of God where others saw it not. But they never thought of tracing out the chain of intermediate causes by which such results were connected with men's spiritual state. They saw the facts, they

recognised the truth, and they threw themselves back at once upon the will of God as the sufficient explanation.

We, on the other hand, have been so diligent in tracing out the immediately preceding links of natural causation that, for the most part, we have been fatigued before we reached God. We consequently have lost view of Him; and it is wholesome for us to be brought sharply into contact with the ancient Oriental mind as we are here, in order that we may be forced to go the whole way back to Him. For the fact is that much of that very process of decay and destruction from moral causes is going on before us in countries like Turkey and Morocco, where social righteousness is all but unknown, and private morality is low. A truly modern mind scorns the idea that the fertility of the soil can be affected by immorality. Yet there is the whole of Mesopotamia to show that misgovernment can make a garden into a desert. Where teeming populations once covered the country with fruitful gardens and luxurious cities, there is now in the lands of the Tigris and Euphrates a few handfuls of people, and all the fertility of the country has disappeared. Irrigation channels which made all things live have been choked up and have been gradually filled with drifting sand, and one of the most populous and fertile countries of the world has become a desert. In Palestine the same thing may be seen. Under Turkish domination the character of the soil has been entirely changed. In many places where in ancient days the hills were terraced to the top the sweeping rains have had their way, and the very soil has been carried off, leaving only rocks to blister in the pitiless sun. Even in the less likely sphere of animal fecundity modern science shows that peace and good government and righteous order are causes of extraordinary power. And the movements which are going on around us at this day in the elevation and depression

of nations and races have a visible connection with fidelity or lack of fidelity to known principles of order and justice. This can be said without concealing how scanty and partial in most cases such attainments are. Prevailing principles can be discerned in the providence which rules the world. And these are of such a kind that the connection which obedience to the highest known rules of life has with fertility, success and prosperity, is constant and intimate. It is, too, far wider reaching than at first sight would seem possible. To this extent, even modern knowledge justifies these blessings and curses of Deuteronomy.

But it may be asked, Is this all the Old Testament means by such threats and promises? Does it recognise any even self-imposed limitations to the direct action of Divine power? Most probably it does not. Though always keeping clear of Pantheism, the Old Testament is so filled and possessed by the Divine Presence that all second causes are ignored, and the action of God upon nature was conceived, as it could not fail to be, on the analogy of a workman using tools. Now that the methods of Divine action in nature have been studied in the light of science, they have been found to be more fixed and regular than was supposed. The extent of their operation, too, has been found to be immeasurably wider, and the purposes which have to be cared for at every moment are now seen to be infinitely various. As a result, human thought has fallen back discouraged, and takes refuge more and more in a conception of nature which practically deifies it, or at least entirely separates it from any intimate relation to the will of God. It is even denied that there is any purpose in the world at all, or any goal, and to chance or fate all the vicissitudes of life and the mechanical changes of nature are attributed. But though we must recognise, as

the Old Testament does not, that ordinary Divine action flows out in perfectly well-defined channels, and is so stable in its movement that results in the sphere of physical nature may be predicted with certainty; and though we see, as was not seen in ancient days, that even God does not always approach His ends by direct and short-cut paths,—these considerations only make the Old Testament view more inspiring and more healthful for us. We may gather from it the inference that if the fertility of a land, the frequency of disease, and success in war are so powerfully affected by the moral and spiritual quality of a people, it is very likely that in subtler and less palpable ways the same influences produce similar effects, even in regions where they cannot be traced. If so, whatever allowance may be required for the inevitable simplicity of Old Testament conceptions on this subject, however much we miss the limitations we have learned to regard as necessary, the Deuteronomic view as to the effects of moral and spiritual declension upon the material fortunes of a people is much nearer the truth than our timorous and hesitating half-belief. To find these effects emphasised and affirmed as they are here, therefore, acts as a much needed tonic in our spiritual life. Coming too from a man who possessed, if ever man did, Divinely inspired insight into the process of the world and the ideal of human life, these promises and warnings bring God near. They dissipate the mists which obscure the workings of God's Providence, and keep before us aspects of truth which it is the present tendency of thought to ignore too much. They declare in accents which carry conviction that, even in material things, the Lord reigneth; and for that the world has reason to be supremely glad.

Certainly Christians now know that prosperity in material things is by no means God's best gift. That

great principle must be held to firmly, as well as the legitimacy of the vivid hopes and fears of Old Testament times regarding the material rewards of right-doing. In many ways the new principle must overrule and modify for us those hopes and fears. But with this limitation we are justified in occupying the Deuteronomic standpoint and in repeating the Deuteronomic warnings. For to its very core the world is God's; and those who find His working everywhere are those whose eyes have been opened to the inmost truth of things.

With regard to the farewell speech contained in chapters xxix. and xxx. and the related parts of chapter iv. and chapter xxxi. there is not much to be said. Taken as a whole, it develops the promises and threats of the previous chapters, and repeats again with affectionate hortatory purpose much of the history. But there is not a great deal that is new; most of the underlying principles of the address have been already dealt with. Taken according to the reconstruction of the speech and its reinsertion in its original framework, the course of things would seem to have been this. After the threats and promises had been concluded, Moses, carrying on the injunction of iii. 28, addressed (chapter xxxii. 8) all the people and appointed Joshua to be his successor; then he wrote out "this law," and produced it before the priests and elders of the people, with the instruction that at the end of every seven years, at the feast of release, in the feast of tabernacles, it should be read before all Israel, men, women, and children (chapter xxxi., vv. 9-13). Then he gave the book to the Levites, that they might "lay it up" by the side of the Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh their God, that it might be there for a witness against them when they became unfaithful, as he foresaw they would. He next summons all Israel to him, and delivers the farewell address

contained in chapters iv., xxix., and xxx., an outline of which has already been given (p. 438), according to Westphal's recombination. This would seem to indicate that Moses himself inaugurated the custom of reading the law and giving instruction to all the people, which he prescribed for the feast of tabernacles in the year of release. After the law had been given he addressed the whole people in this farewell speech.

But though on the whole there is no need for detailed exposition here, there are one or two things which ought to be noticed, things which express the spirit of Deuteronomy so directly and so sincerely that they can be identified as forming part of the original Deuteronomic speech. One of these is unquestionably xxx. 11-20. At the end of the farewell address a return is made to the core of the whole Deuteronomic teaching: "Thou shalt love Yahweh thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." This was announced with unique emphasis at the beginning; it has lain behind all the special commands which have been insisted upon since; and now it emerges again into view as the conclusion of the whole matter. For beyond doubt this, and not the whole series of legal precepts, is what is meant by "this commandment" in verse 11. Both before it, in the sixth and tenth verses, and after it, in the sixteenth and twentieth verses, this precept is repeated and insisted on as the Divine command. Had the individual commands or the whole mass of them together been meant, the phrase used would have been different. It would have been that in ver. 10, where they are called "His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law," or something analogous. No, it is the central command of love to God, without which all external obedience is vain, which is the theme of this last great paragraph; and a clear perception of this will carry us

through both the obscurities of it, and the difficulties of St. Paul's application of it in the Romans.

Of this then the author of Deuteronomy says: "It is not too hard for thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." That is to say, there is no mystery or difficulty about this commandment of love. Neither have you to go to the uttermost parts of the sea to hear it, nor need you search into the mysteries of heaven. It has been brought near to you by all the mercy and forgiveness and kindness of Yahweh; it has been made known to you now by my mouth, even in its pettiest applications. But that is not all; it is graven on your own heart, which leaps up in glad response to this demand, and in answer to the manifestation of God's love for you. It is really the fundamental principle of your own nature that is appealed to. You should clearly feel that life in the love of God and man is the only fit life for you who are made in the image of God. If you do, then the fulfilment of all the Divine precepts will be easy, and your lives will lighten more and more unto the perfect day.

Now, for an Oriental of the pre-Christian era such teaching is most marvellous. How marvellous it is Christians perhaps find it difficult to see. In point of fact, many have denied that Old Testament teaching ever had this character. Misled by the doctrines of Islam, the great Semitic religion of to-day, many assert that the religion of ancient Israel called upon men to submit to mere power in submitting to God. But the appeal of our

text to the heart of man shows that this is an error. No such appeal has ever been made to Mohammedans. Their state of mind in regard to God is represented by the remark of a recent traveller in Persia. Speaking of the Persian Babis, who may be described roughly as an heretical sect whose minds have been formed by Mohammedanism, he says: "They seemed to have no conception of absolute good, or absolute truth; to them good was merely what God chose to ordain, and truth what He chose to reveal, so that they could not understand how any one could attempt to test the truth of a religion by an ethical and moral standard."[1] Now that is precisely the opposite of the Deuteronomic attitude. Israel is encouraged and incited to right action by having it pointed out that not only experience, not only Divinely given statutes and judgments, but the very nature of man itself guarantees the truth of this supreme law of love. The law laid upon men is nothing strange to, or incongruous with, their own better selves. It is the very thing which their hearts have cried out for; when it is proclaimed the higher nature in man recognises it and bows before it. It is not received because of fear, nor is it bowed before because it is backed by power which can smite men to the dust. No; even in its ruins human nature is nobler than that; and Deuteronomy everywhere teaches with burning conviction that God is too ethical and spiritual in nature to accept the submission of a slave.

This reading of our passage is plainly that which St. Paul takes in Rom. x. 5 and 6. He perceives, what so many fail to do, that the spirit and scope of the Deuteronomic teaching are different from that of the purely legal sections of the Pentateuch. Paul therefore quotes the Pentateuch as having already made the distinction

[1] *A Year Among the Persians* E. G. Browne, p. 406.

between works and faith which he wishes to emphasise, and as having distinctly given preference to the latter. Leviticus, keeps men at the level of the worker for wages, while Deuteronomy in this passage, by making love to God the essence of all true observance of the law, raises them almost to the level of sons. And just as in those ancient days the highest manifestations of God had not to be laboured for and sought by impotent strivings, but had plainly been made known to them and had found an echo in their hearts, so now the highest revelation had been brought near to men in Christ, and had found a similar response. They did not need to seek it in heaven, for it had been brought to earth in the Incarnation. They did not need to descend into the abyss, for all that was needed had been brought thence by Christ at His resurrection. And in the New Testament as in the Old, the simplicity of the entrance into true relations with God is emphasised. Love and faith are the fundamental conditions. From them obedience will naturally issue, since "to faith all things are possible, and to love all things are easy."

CHAPTER XXV

THE SONG AND BLESSING OF MOSES

(A). The Song of Moses

Deut. xxxii.

CRITICS have debated the date, authorship, and history of this song. For the present purpose it is sufficient, perhaps, to refer to the statement on these points in the note below.[1]

But in discussing the meaning and contents of the song the differences referred to cause no difficulties. On any

[1] The song is described, in the narrative framework, as delivered through Moses to the children of Israel. On the other hand, internal evidence points to a date after the establishment of the monarchy—when the days of Moses and the events of the wilderness were old, when the fruits of the land were gifts of God in present use, and when ingratitude and rebellion had become conspicuous, so that judgment was impending. Either, then, Moses took his stand, in the spirit, at a point of time long subsequent to his own death, adapted the song to its circumstances, and spoke not to his own generation but to one much later; or a later prophet must be the writer. The objection to the former view is supported by arguments drawn from various features in the language and the allusions of the song, which are asserted to be indicative of the later origin. On the detail of these we cannot dwell. But the most interesting part of the argument is the position that the transference of the prophetic consciousness to a remote future period, in order to give hope and guidance to a generation not the prophet's own, is too improbable to be admitted.

Such a process is now generally regarded as not impossible indeed, but unheard of in the history of prophecy. The examination of the prophets of the Old Testament has convinced students that the prophet's vision starts from his own time, and is primarily for the comfort and

supposition the time and circumstances, whether assumed as present, or actually and really present to the prophet's mind, can clearly be identified as not earlier than those of the Syrian wars. Accepted as dealing with that time, this poem takes its place among the Psalms of that period. Its subject is a very common one in Scripture: the goodness of Yahweh to His people, and their unfaithfulness to Him; His grief at their rebellion; His punishment of them by heathen oppressors; and His turning in love to them, along with His destruction of the nations who had prematurely triumphed over the people of God. Practically this is the burden of all the prophecies, as indeed it may be said to be the burden of the whole Book of Deuteronomy itself. Here it is stated and elaborated with great poetic skill; but in the main, the essential thought, there is little that has not already been elucidated.

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warning of his contemporaries. His words may have a more remote reference, but must have the nearer one. Hence Isa. xl.—lxvi. is now ascribed to a prophet or prophets of the Exile. The principle is really the same as that which determines the authorship of Deut. xxxiv. 5-12. No one now holds the view of some Jews, that Moses by the spirit of prophecy wrote this himself. Yet if Moses could in a poem address his people as sinning and suffering through rebellions induced by their prosperity in Canaan, which they had not entered when he died, one might as well believe him to describe his own decease. In both cases we have to suppose the mind of Moses transported to a period when he had been removed by death, that he might look back upon and speak of events which when he wrote were still future. Now in both cases a reason is lacking. Every one accepts the view that since Joshua or Eleazar was there to write the account of Moses' death, it is unlikely the lawgiver should have been inspired to write it himself. Just so, since Yahweh inspired new prophets at every crisis of His people's history, it seems unlikely that the spirit of Moses should be transferred to, and made at home in, the circumstances of a distant generation, in order to deliver to it a message which could have been made known by a prophet to whom the time was present. Neither Kamphausen nor Oettli nor Dillmann nor the English expositors who accept the non-

As regards form the poem is among the finest specimens of Hebrew literary art which the Old Testament contains. Every verse contains at least two parallel clauses of three words or word-complexes each, and the parallelism in the great majority of instances is of the "Synonymous" kind; that is to say, "the second line enforces the thought of the first by repeating, and as it were *echoing* it in a varied form."[1] But into this as a foundation there is wrought a great deal of pleasing variation. The two-clause verses are varied by single instances or couplets or triplets of four-clause verses; while in two cases, at the emphatic end of sections, in vv. 14 and 39, the rare five-clause verse is found. Further, the synonymous parallelism is relieved by occasional appearances of the "synthetic" parallelism, in which "the second line contains neither a repetition nor a contrast to the thought of the first, but in different ways supplements and completes it,"[2] *e.g.* vv. 8, 19, and 27.

Mosaic authorship of the song have any doubt as to the supernatural character of prophecy. They found upon observations as to the manner of Old Testament prophecy, which ought to regulate interpretation.

According to critical views the ascription to Moses of the reception and delivery of this song was taken by the Deuteronomist from JE. Kautzsch supposes that an editor to whom the song was known as passing under the name of Moses may have inserted it. Dillmann suggests grounds for believing that several prayers and poems ascribed to Moses (including Psalm xc.) were in circulation in prophetic circles in the Northern Kingdom, and that this one of them was inserted here as its appropriate place. The case would be parallel to the ascription of various later Psalms to David. Compare also the discussions as to the song of Hannah, 1 Sam. ii.

The view that a mistake as to the Mosaic authorship, for which the writers of JE were not responsible, was handed on in perfect good faith, is compatible with the doctrine of inspiration as held by representatives of the orthodox Evangelical school in Germany, and by the newer Evangelicals in England. Cf. Oettli, *Deuteronomy*, p. 22, and Sanday's *Bampton Lecture*.

[1] Cf. Driver's *Introduction*, 5th edition, p. 340.

[2] Cf. Driver, *cit. loc.*

The contents of the song are in every way worthy of the origin assigned to it, and higher praise than that it is impossible to conceive. Beginning with a fine exordium calling upon heaven and earth to give ear, the inspired poet expresses the hope that his teaching may fall with refreshing and fertilising power upon the hearts of men, for he is about to proclaim the name of Yahweh, to whom all greatness is to be ascribed. In vv. 4 ff. the character and dealings of Yahweh are set over against those of the people :—

> "The Rock! His deeds are perfect,
> For all His ways are judgment;
> A God of faithfulness and without falsity,
> Just and upright is He."

They, on the contrary, were perverse and crooked; and, acting corruptly, they requited all Yahweh's benefits with rebellion. To win them from that perverseness, he calls upon his people to look back upon the whole course of God's dealings with them. Even before Israel had appeared among the nations, Yahweh had taken thought for His people. When He assigned their lands to the various nations of the world He had always before Him the provision that must be made for the children of Israel, and had left a space for them from which none but Yahweh could ever drive them out. For He had the same need of and delight in His people as the nations had in the lands assigned to them, the lot of their inheritance. And not only had He thus prepared a place for Israel from the beginning, but He had led him through the wilderness, through "the waste, the howling desert."

> "He compassed him about, He cared for him,
> He kept him as the apple of His eye."

To depict the Divine care worthily, he ventures upon a simile of a specially tender kind, rare in the Old Testament,

but to which our Lord's comparison of His own brooding affection for Jerusalem to that of a "hen gathering her chickens under her wing" is parallel.

> "As an eagle stirs up her nest,
> Flutters above her young;
> He, Yahweh, spread abroad His wings, He took him,
> He bore him upon His pinions."

All the hardship and the toil were of God's appointment to drive His beloved people upwards and onwards. Whatever they might think or believe now, it was Yahweh alone, without companion or ally, who had done this for them, borne them up through it, and had bestowed upon them all the luxury of the goodly land once promised to their fathers. Even from the rocks He had given them honey, and the rocky soil had produced the olive tree. They had, too, all the luxuries of a pastoral people in abundance, and the wheat and foaming wine which were the finest products of agriculture.

In every way their God had blessed them. They had all the prosperity which a complete fulfilment of the will of God could have brought, but the result of it all was unfaithfulness and rejection of Him. Jeshurun, the upright people, as the sacred singer in bitter irony calls Israel, waxed fat and wanton. Instead of being drawn to God by His benefits, they had been puffed up with conceit concerning their own power and discernment. Full of these, they had mingled idolatrous rites with their worship of Yahweh. He had suffered them to reap the results of their own unfaithfulness in defeat at the hands of their foes.

Instead of seeking the cause of their ill-success in themselves, they had found it in the weakness of their God. All the victories Yahweh had given them over foes whose strength they had feared were forgotten, and they "despised the Rock of their salvation." They had adopted

new and upstart deities whom their fathers had never heard of, who as they had come up in a day might disappear in a day, and neglected the Rock who begat them.

Yahweh on His part saw all this, and scorned His people and their doings. In a vivid imaginative picture the poet represents Him as resolving to hide His face from them, to see what their end would be. Without the shining of God's countenance there could be but one issue for a people who were so faithless and perverse. He will recompense them for their doings.

> "They made Me jealous with a no-God,
> They vexed Me with their vain idols,
> And I will make them jealous with a no-people,
> With a foolish nation will I vex them."

For the fire of Divine wrath is kindled against them. It burns in Yahweh with an all-consuming power, and fills the universe even to the lowest depths of Sheol. Upon this sinful people it is about to burst forth; Yahweh will exhaust all His arrows upon them. By famine and drought; by disease and the rage of wild beasts, and of "the crawlers of the dust"; by giving them up to their enemies, and by overwhelming them with terror. He will destroy this people, "the young man and the virgin, the suckling and the man of grey hairs" alike. Nothing could save them, save Yahweh's respect for His own name.

> "I had said, I shall blow them away,
> I shall make their memory to cease from among men:
> Were it not that I feared vexation from the enemy,
> Lest their adversaries should misdeem,
> Lest they should say, *Our* hand is exalted,
> And Yahweh hath not done all this."

Nothing but that stood between them and utter destruction, for as a nation they had no capacity for receiving

and profiting by instruction. If they had been wise they would have known that there was but a step between them and death; they would have seen that their deeds had separated them from Yahweh, and could have but one issue. Their frequent and shameful defeats should have taught them that, for

> "How could one chase a thousand,
> And two put to flight ten thousand,
> Were it not that their Rock had sold them,
> And that Yahweh had delivered them up?"

There was no possible explanation of Israel's defeats but this; for neither in the gods of the heathen nor in the heathen nations themselves was there anything to account for them. Their gods were not comparable to the Rock of Israel; even Israel's enemies knew as much as that. Israel might forget and doubt Yahweh's power, but those who had been smitten before Him in Israel's happier days knew that He was above all their gods. Nor was the explanation to be sought in the heathen nations themselves. For they were not vines of Yahweh's planting, but shoots from the vine of Sodom, tainted by the soil of Gomorrah. They were, perhaps, in race, of the old Canaanite stock; in any case they were morally and spiritually related to them, and their acts were such as brought death and destruction with them. In themselves, consequently, they could not have been strong enough to discomfit the people of God as they were doing, nor could they have been helped to that by any favour of His. Only the determination of Yahweh to chastise His people could explain Israel's unhappy fate in war.

But Yahweh's purpose was only to chastise. He was in no way finally forgetful of His chosen, nor of the ineradicable evil of their enemies' nature. The inner character of men and things is always present to Him, and their deeds are laid up with Him as that which must

be dealt with, for it is one of the glories of Deity to sweep evil away and to restore anything that has good at its heart. Recompense is God's great function in the world, and evil, however strong it may be, and however long it may triumph, must one day be dealt with by Him. It is laid up and sealed

> "Against the day of vengeance and of recompense,
> Against the time when their foot shall slip;
> For the day of their calamity is at hand,
> And hastening are the things prepared for them."

Without that, justice could never be done to the people of God; and justice should be done to them when they had been brought to the verge of extinction, when, according to the antique Hebrew phrase, there "was none fettered or set free," none left under or over age. Then when all but the worst had come, Yahweh would demand, "Where are their gods, with whom they took refuge, and who have eaten the fat of their sacrifices, and drunk the wine of their drink offerings?" He will challenge them to arise and help in this last disastrous state of their votaries.

But there will be no response, and it will be made clear beyond all doubting that Yahweh alone is God. He will declare Himself, saying :—

> "See now that I, I, am He,
> And there is no god with **Me**
> *I* kill, and *I* make alive;
> I wound, and I heal:
> And there is none that delivereth out of My hand."

In that great day of Yahweh's manifested glory He will stand forth in the fulness of avenging power. Before the universe He will pledge Himself by the most solemn oath to bring down the pride of His enemies. In a death-dealing judgment, such as is seen only when the evil elements in the world have brought about a mere

carnival of wickedness, and only universal death can cleanse, He will recompense upon evil-doers the evil they have wrought, and to a renovated world bring peace. There are few finer or more impressive imaginative passages in Scripture than this:—

"For I lift up My hand to heaven,
And say, (As) I live for ever,
If I whet My gleaming sword,
And My hand take hold on judgment,
I will take vengeance upon Mine enemies,
And I will recompense them that hate Me.
I will make Mine arrows drunk with blood,
And My sword shall devour flesh,
With the blood of the slain and the captives,
From the chief of the leaders of the enemy."

With this great vision of judgment the poet leaves his people. For them the first necessity evidently was that they should be assured that Yahweh reigned, that evil could not ultimately prosper. With their whole horizon dominated and illumined by this tremendous figure of the ever living and avenging God, their faith in the moral government of the world and in the ultimate deliverance of their nation would be restored.

The poem closes with a stanza in which the seer and singer calls upon the nations to rejoice because o Yahweh's people. The deliverance worked for them will be so great and so memorable that even the heathen who see it must rejoice. They will see His justice and His faithfulness, and will gain new confidence in the stability and the moral character of the forces which rule the world.

(B) The Blessing of Moses

Deut. xxxiii.

Besides the farewell speeches and the farewell song, we have in this chapter yet another closing utterance

attributed to Moses. Here, as in the case of the song, we relegate critical matters to the note below.[1]

We must notice in the first place the remarkable difference in tone and outlook between the blessing and the song of Moses. In the latter evil-doing and approaching judgment are the burden; here the outward and inward condition of Israel leaves little to be desired. Satisfaction is breathed in every line, for both temporally and spiritually the state of the people is almost ideally happy. Nowhere is there a shadow; even on the horizon there is scarcely a cloud. Now even an optimist would need a background of actual prosperity to draw such a picture of idyllic happiness for any nation, and we

[1] The blessing of Moses was certainly not written by the author of Deuteronomy: the vocabulary and the style are different from his. Nor probably was the poem inserted here by him, but rather by the final editor of the Pentateuch who is believed to have brought these closing chapters into their present shape (cf. Chap. XXIV.). The authority on which he relied may have been E.

As to the authorship of the blessing, Volck and Keil ascribe it to Moses. The great majority of recent students regard it, at all events in its present form, as post-Mosaic, on grounds drawn from features in the poem, and from the principles of prophetic exegesis referred to in the note (p. 452). Opinions differ much as to the date to be assigned, varying from the time of David to that of Jeroboam II. The general assumption is that the blessing is the work of a Northern Israelite; and the feeling for the tribes of Levi and Judah which it embodies is the chief indication on which a conjecture can be hazarded. That would agree with a date later than Solomon and not later than Jehoshaphat—a period when many in the Northern Kingdom still looked with reverence to the sanctuary at Jerusalem, and when the Northern Levites still resented the intrusion by Jeroboam of a mixed multitude into the priesthood.

As to form, and partly as to contents, the blessing of Moses is modelled on the blessing of Jacob (Gen. xlix). One conspicuous difference is the introduction into that before us of a prose heading before most of the sections, analogous to the headings which appear in Arabic poetry (as the *Hamasa*) before each quatrain or longer poem. There is no ground for treating these as later insertions, nor for separating other portions, as some have proposed, as later than the main composition.

may therefore conclude that the poem has in view one of the few halcyon periods of Israel, before social wrongs had ruined the yeomen farmers, or war and conquest had corrupted the powerful. The nation is as yet faithful to Yahweh, and possesses in peace the land which He had given them to inherit.

The central part of the poem is of course the ten blessings promised to the various tribes, but these are preceded by an introduction (vv. 2-5), in which the formation of the people is traced to Yahweh's revelation of Himself and His coming forth as their King. They are followed also by a concluding section (vv. 26-29), in which the God of Jeshurun is declared to be incomparable, and His people are depicted as supremely happy under His protecting care. The language is in parts obscure, and though the general scope is always plain, yet there are verses the meaning of which can only be conjectured. This is especially the case in the introduction. Of the five lines of ver. 2, the fourth and fifth as they stand are hardly intelligible; the fifth indeed is not intelligible at all. In ver. 3 again, while the first and second clauses are fairly clear, the third and fourth are as they stand untranslatable. But the general signification of the introductory verses (2-5) is that the Divine revelation of Himself which Yahweh bestowed upon His people as He came with them from Sinai, Paran, and Seir through the wilderness, and the establishment of the covenant which made Yahweh Israel's King, together with the bestowal of an inheritance upon them, is the foundation and beginning of that happiness which is to be described. It is all traced back to the "dawning" of God upon them, His "shining out" upon them from Sinai, and Seir, and Paran. These are named simply as the most prominent points in that region whence the people came out into Canaan, and where the great revelation had been bestowed. God had

risen like the sun and had shed forth light upon them there, so that they walked no more in darkness. The sight of God was, on this view, the great and fundamental fact in the history of the chosen people. They, like all who have seen that great sight, were henceforth separate from others, with different duties and obligations, with hopes and desires and joys unknown to all beside. And the ground of this condescension on the part of God was His love for His people. He loved them, and the saints among them were upheld by Him. By Moses He gave them a law, which was to hold from generation to generation; and He had crowned His gifts to them by becoming their King when the heads of the people entered into covenant with Him.

Then follow the blessings, beginning with good wishes for Reuben as the firstborn. But the tribe is not highly favoured. It is however less severely dealt with than in Jacob's blessing. There instability and obscurity are foretold of it. Here it would seem as if the fortunes of the tribe were at the lowest ebb, and a wish is expressed that it may not be suffered to die out. From the earliest times the tribe of Reuben seems to have been tending to decay. At the first census taken under Moses the number of Reubenites capable of bearing arms was 46,500 men (Numb. i. 21), at the second 43,730 (Numb. xxvi. 7). Both passages are from P, and consequently this decadence of the tribe must have been present to that author's mind. In David's day they had still possession of part of their heritage, but even then their best estate was past. They had allowed many Moabites to remain in the territory they conquered. These most certainly caused trouble and gained the upper hand in places, until before the days of Mesa, king of Moab, as we learn from his inscription,[1] a great part of the cities formerly

[1] Dillmann, *Deuteronomy*, p. 420.

Reubenite were in Moabite or Gadite hands. In Isaiah xv. and xvi. again, Heshbon and Elealeh, cities still Reubenite in Mesa's day, appear as Moabite, so that the bulk of the territory assigned to the tribe must have been lost.[1] This record confirms the view that the blessing was written between Rehoboam and Jehoshaphat, and throws light upon our verse:—

> "May Reuben live, and not die,
> So that his men be few."

The blessing of Judah follows, but in contrast with the great destiny foretold for this tribe in Jacob's blessing what is here said is strangely short and unenthusiastic:—

> "Hear, O Yahweh, Judah's voice,
> And bring him to his people;
> With his hands has he striven for it (his people);
> And a help against his enemies be thou."

Some whose opinions we are bound to respect, as Oettli, think this refers merely to Judah's being appointed to lead the van of the invasion, as in Judges i. 1 and xx. 8. In that case we should have to conceive that on some occasion Judah was absent leading the conquest, and got into dangerous circumstances, which are here referred to. But it would seem that any such temporary danger could hardly have a place here. In all the other blessings permanent conditions only are regarded; and the sole historical fact we really know that would explain this reference is the division of the kingdom. But, it may be said, all critics agree that the author of the blessing is a Northern Israelite: now we cannot suppose a Northern man to speak in this way of Judah, for it was the ten tribes that revolted from the house of David, not Judah from them. We must remember, however, that though

[1] Baethgen's Riehm, *Handwörterbuch*, p. 1321.

that is how Scripture, which in this matter represents the Southern view, regards the matter, the Northern Israelites could look at the separation from another standpoint. To those even who were favourable to the Davidic house, and regretted the folly of Rehoboam, it might seem that Judah had first broken away from the kingdom as united under Saul; and the revolt under Jeroboam would appear to be only a resumption of the older state of things, from which Judah had again separated itself. What circumstance can be referred to in the request to hear Judah's voice cannot now be ascertained; but it is not at all unlikely that some indication of a wish for reunion, perhaps expressed in some public prayer, may have been given in the first period of the separation. The rest of the verse would fit this hypothesis as well as it fits the other, and I think with the light we at present have we must hold the reference to be as suggested.

With the eighth verse the blessing of Levi (one of the two most heartfelt and sympathetic) begins. In it Yahweh is addressed thus:—

> "Thy Urim and thy Thummim be to the men (*i.e.* tribe) of thy devoted one (*i.e.* Moses or Aaron),
> Whom thou didst prove at Massah,
> With whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah."

In the last lines the relative pronoun is ambiguous, as it may refer either to "men," for which in Hebrew we have the collective singular *'ish*, or to "thy devoted one." The last is the more probable; but in either case there is a superficial discrepancy here between the historical books and this statement. In Exod. xvii. 1-7, as well as in Deuteronomy itself, it is the people who strove with Moses and proved or tempted Yahweh. On this account some would have us believe that a different account of the events at Massah and Meribah was in this writer's mind.

But that is the result of a mere itch for discovering discrepancies. It lies in the very nature of the case that there should be another side to it. The beginning was with the people; but just as the wandering in the wilderness is said to have been meant by God to prove Israel, so this insubordination of the people was meant to prove Moses or Aaron, and their failure to stand the proof made Yahweh strive with them. The verse, then, founds Levi's claim to possess the chief oracle and to instruct Israel first of all upon their connection with Moses or Aaron, or both, since they had been exceptionally tried and had proved their devotion. The next verse, then, goes on to found it also on the faithfulness of the Levites, when they were called upon by Moses (Exod. xxxii. 26-29) to punish the people for their worship of the golden calf. In vv. 27 and 29 of that chapter we find the same phrases,

9 "Who (*i.e.* the tribe) said unto his father and to his mother,
I have not seen him;
Who recognised not his brother, and would know nought of his son;
For they kept Thy commandment,
And kept guard over Thy covenant."

Being such—

10 "Let them teach Jacob Thy judgments,
And Israel Thy Torah;
Let them put incense in Thy nostrils,
And whole burnt-offerings upon Thine altars."

Here we have the whole priestly duties assigned to the Levites. They are to perform judicial functions; to give Torah, or instruction, by means of the Urim and Thummim and otherwise; to offer incense in the Holy Place, and sacrifices in the court of the Temple. As early as this, therefore (on any supposition we need regard, long before Deuteronomy), we find the Levites fully established as

the priestly tribe. Before the earliest writing prophets this was so—a fact of the greatest importance for the history of Israelite religion. The remaining verse beseeches Yahweh to accept the work of Levi's hands, and to smite down his enemies. Evidently when this was written special enmity was being shown to this tribe; and, as has been said already, the religious proceedings of Jeroboam I. would be sufficient to call forth such a cry to Yahweh.

In ver. 12 the tribe of Benjamin is dealt with, and it is depicted as specially blessed by the Divine favour and the Divine presence. Yahweh covers him all the day long, and dwells between his shoulders. There can hardly be a doubt that the reference is to the situation of the Temple at Jerusalem, on the hill of Zion, towards the loftier boundary of Benjamin's territory.

Verses 13-17 contain the blessing of Joseph, *i.e.* of the two tribes Ephraim and Manasseh.

13 "Blessed of Yahweh be his land
By the precious things of heaven from above,
By the deep which crouches beneath;

14 "By the precious things of the sun,
And the precious things of the moons;

15 "And by the (precious things of the) tops of the ancient mountains
And by the precious things of the everlasting hills;

16 "And by the precious things of the earth and its fulness.
And may the good-will of Him that dwelt in the bush
Come upon Joseph's head,
And upon the top of the head of the crowned among his brethren.

17 "May the firstborn of his ox be glorious;
And the horns thereof like the horns of the wild-ox;
With them may he gore the peoples, even all the earth's ends together.
These (*i.e.* thus blessed) are the myriads of Ephraim,
And these the thousands of Manasseh."

Supreme fertility is to be his, and the favour of Yahweh is to rest upon him as the kingly tribe in Israel. The curious

phrase at the beginning of the seventeenth verse has been supposed to be a reference to some individual, Joshua, Jeroboam II., or to the Ephraimite kings as a whole. But the subject of the blessing is the Josephite tribes, and there seems to be no good reason why the reference should be changed here. It cannot, therefore, refer to less than a whole tribe, and as according to Gen. xlviii. 14 Ephraim received the blessing of the firstborn, it must be Ephraim which is Joseph's firstborn ox. This view is confirmed by the last clause of the verse, in which the myriads of Ephraim are spoken of, and only the thousands of Manasseh. Obviously this must refer to times like those of Omri, when the Israelite kingship was in its first youthful energy, and was extending conquest on every hand.

The benedictions which remain are addressed to Zebulun, Issachar, Gad, Dan, Naphtali, and Asher. They need little comment beyond close translation.

18 "And of Zebulun he said,
Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out;
And, Issachar, in thy tents.

19 "They shall call the peoples unto the mountain;
They shall offer sacrifices of righteousness:
For they shall suck the abundance of the seas,
And the hidden treasures of the sand."

The territory of Zebulun stretched from the Sea of Galilee to the Mediterranean, probably quite down to the sea near Akko, in any case near enough to give it an active share in the sea traffic. Issachar, whose tribal land was the plain of Esdraelon, also shares in it; but the contrast between "thy going out" and "thy tents" implies that Zebulun took the more active part in the traffic. The reference in verse 19, clauses *a* and *b*, is obscure. As the Septuagint reads "they shall destroy" instead of "unto the mountain," the text may be corrupt.

It may perhaps be an allusion to the sacrificial feasts at inaugurated fairs to which surrounding peoples were called, as Stade suggests.

20 "And of Gad he said,
Blessed be the enlarger of Gad:
He dwelleth as a lioness,
And teareth the arm, yea, the crown of the head.
21 "And he looked out the first part for himself,
Because there a (tribal) ruler's portion lay ready;
And he came with the heads of the people,
He executed the justice of Yahweh,
And His judgments in company with Israel."

At this time Gad was in possession of a wide territory, and was famed for courage and success in war. His foresight in choosing the first of the conquered land as a worthy tribal portion is praised, and his faithfulness in carrying out his bargain to accompany the nation in its attack on the west Jordan land.

22 "And of Dan he said,
Dan is a lion's whelp,
Leaping forth from Bashan."

This does not mean that Dan's territory was Bashan, but only that his attack was as fierce and unexpected as that of a lion leaping forth from the crevices and caves of the rocks in Bashan.

23 "And of Naphtali he said,
O Naphtali, sated with favour,
And full of the blessing of Yahweh:
Possess thou the sea and the south."

The soil in the territory of Naphtali was specially fruitful, in the region of Huleh and on the shore of the Sea of Gennesaret. These are the sea and the hot south part which the tribe is called upon to take as a possession, and because of which the favour of Yahweh and His blessing specially rested upon it.

24 "And of Asher he said,
Blessed above children be Asher;

May he be the favoured of his brethren,
And dip his feet in oil.

25 "Iron and brass (be) thy bars;
And as thy days (so may) thy strength (be)."

The last line is extremely doubtful. The word translated "thy strength" is really not known, and that meaning probably implies another reading; "thy bars" in the previous line is also doubtful. The reference to oil probably implies that the olive tree was specially fruitful, in the country inhabited by Asher, but why he should be specially favoured of his brethren can now hardly be conjectured.

In the concluding verses we have an exaltation of Israel's God and of His people. Speaking out of the time when Israel had driven out its enemies and was in full and undisturbed possession of its heritage (ver. 28), the poet declares to Jeshurun how incomparable God is. He rides upon the heaven to bring help to them, and He comes in the clouds with majesty. The God of old time is Israel's refuge or dwelling, covering him from above, and beneath, *i.e.* on the earth. His everlasting arms bear His people up in their weariness, and shelter them there against all foes. He has proved this by thrusting out before them, and by commanding them to destroy, their enemies.

28 "And so Israel came to dwell in safety,
The fountain of Jacob alone,
In a land of corn and wine;
Yea, His heavens drop down dew.

29 "Happy art thou, O Israel:
Who is like unto thee?
A people saved by Yahweh,
The shield of thy help
And the sword of thy majesty!
Thine enemies shall feign friendship to thee;
And thou shalt tread upon their high places."

CHAPTER XXVI

MOSES' CHARACTER AND DEATH

IT has been often said, and it has even become a principle of the critical school, that the historical notices in the earlier documents of the Old Testament represent nothing but the ideas current at the time when they were written. Whether they depict an Abraham, a Jacob, or a Moses, all they really tell us is the kind of character which at such times was held to be heroic. In this way the value of the historic parts of Deuteronomy have been called in question, and we have been told that all we can gather from them about Moses is the kind of character which the pious, in the age of Manasseh, would feel justified in attributing to their great religious hero. But it is manifestly unfair to estimate the statements of men who write in good faith, as if they were only projecting their own desires and prejudices upon a past which is absolutely dark. It may be true that such writers might be unwilling to narrate stories concerning the great men of the past which were inconsistent with the esteem in which they were held; but it is much more certain that their narratives will represent the tradition and the current knowledge of their time regarding the heroes of their race. Unless this be true, no reliance could be placed upon anything but absolutely contemporary documents; even these would be open to suspicion, if the human mind were so lawless as to have no scruple in filling up all gaps in its knowledge by imaginations. We must protest,

therefore, against the notion that what J and E and D tell us concerning the life and character of Moses must be discounted in any effort we make to represent to ourselves the life and thought of that great leader of Israel. They tell us much more than what was thought fitting for a leader of the people in the ninth and eighth and seventh centuries B.C. They tell us what was *believed* in those times about Moses; and much of what was believed about him must have rested upon good authority, upon entirely reliable tradition, or upon previous written narratives concerning him.

Up till recently it was held, by men as eminent even as Reuss, that writing was unknown in the days of Moses, and that for long afterwards oral tradition alone could be a source of knowledge of the past. But recent discoveries have shown that this is an entire mistake. Long before Moses writing was a common accomplishment in Canaan; and it seems almost ridiculous to suppose that the man who left his mark so indelibly upon this nation should have been ignorant of an art with which every master of a village or two was thoroughly conversant. Moreover the fact that the same root (*k-t-b*) occurs in every Semitic tongue with the meaning "to write," would seem to indicate that before their separation from one another the art of writing was known to all the Semitic tribes. The new facts enormously strengthen that probability, and make the arguments advanced by those who hold the opposite view look even absurd. But if writing were known and practised in Moses' day in Canaan, it would be marvellous if many of the great events of the early days had not been recorded. It would be still more marvellous if the comparatively late writings, which alone we have at our disposal had not embodied and absorbed much older documents.

But for still another reason the critical dictum must be

held to be false. Applied in other fields and in regard to other times, this same principle would deprive us of almost every character which has been considered the glory of humanity. Zarathustra and Buddha have alike been sacrificed to this prejudice, and there are men living who say that we know so little about our Lord Jesus Christ that it is doubtful whether He ever existed. A method which produces such results *must* be false. The great source of progress and reform has always been some man possessed by an idea or a principle. Even in our own days, when the press and the facilities for communication have given general tendencies a power to realise themselves which they never had in the world's history before, great men are the moving factors in all great changes. In earlier ages this was still more the case. It is an utterly unjustifiable scepticism which makes men contradict the grateful recollection of mankind, in regard to those who have raised and comforted humanity. Through all obscurities and confusions we can reach that Indian Prince for whom the sight of human misery embittered his own brilliant and enjoyable life. We refuse to give up Zarathustra, though his story is more obscure and entangled than that of almost any other great leader of mankind. Especially in a history like that of Israel, which purports to have been guided in a special manner by revelations of the will of God, the individual man filled with God's spirit is quite indispensable. Even if mythical elements in the story could be proved, that would not shake our faith in the existence of Moses; for as Steinthal, who holds the very "advanced" opinion that solar myths have strayed into the history of Moses, wisely says, it is quite as possible to distinguish between the mythical and the historical Moses as it is to distinguish between the historical Charlemagne and the mythical. Because of the general reliability of tradition regarding

great men therefore, and because also of the proofs we have that writing was common before Moses' day, we need not burden ourselves with the assumption or the fear that the Deuteronomic character of Moses may be unreliable.

But in endeavouring to set forth this conception of the character of Moses, we cannot confine ourselves to what appears in this book. It is generally acknowledged that the author had at least the Yahwist and the Elohist documents in their entirety before him, and regarded them with respect, not to say reverence. Consequently we must believe that he accepted what they said of Moses as true. The only document in the Pentateuch that he may not have known in any shape was the Priest Codex, but that makes no attempt to depict the inner or outer life of Moses. All the personal life and colour in the Biblical narrative belongs to the other sources. For a personal estimate, therefore, we lose little by excluding P. Only one other cause of suspicion in regard to the historical parts of Deuteronomy *could* arise. If it, comparatively modern as it is, contained much that was new, if it revealed aspects of character for which no authority was quoted, and of which there was no trace in the earlier narratives, there might be reasonable doubt whether these new details were the product of imagination. But there is very little more in Deuteronomy than there is in the historical parts of the other books, though the older narratives are repeated with a vivid and insistive pathos which almost seems to make them new.

Combining then what the Deuteronomist himself says with what the Yahwist and Elohist documents contain, we find that the claim usually made for Moses, that he was the founder of an entirely new religion, is not sustained. Again and again it is asserted that Yahweh had been the God of their fathers, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—so that Moses was simply the renewer of a higher faith

which for a time had been corrupted. Some have even asserted that there had been all down the ages to Moses the memory of a primeval revelation. But if there ever was such a thing, we learn from Josh. xxiv. 2, a verse acknowledged to be from the Elohist, that that "fair beginning of a time" had been entirely eclipsed, for Terah, the father of Abraham, had served other gods beyond the flood. Abraham, therefore, rather than Moses, is regarded as the founder of the religion of Yahweh. Whether the word Yahweh (Exod. vi. 3) was known or not makes little difference, for all our four authorities teach that Moses' work was the revival of faith in that which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had believed. But the bulk of the people would appear to have been ignorant regarding the God of their fathers; and probably the conception which Deuteronomy shares with J and E is that in Moses' day Yahweh was the special God of a small circle, perhaps of the tribe of Levi, among whom a more spiritual conception of God than was common among their countrymen had either been retained, or had arisen anew. Probably then we ought to conceive the circumstances of Moses' early life somewhat in this way. A number of Semitic tribes, more or less nearly related to each other and to Edom and Moab, had settled in Egypt as semi-agricultural nomads. At first they were tolerated; but they were now being worn down and oppressed by forced labour of the most brutal sort. Either a tribe or a clan among them had the germs of a purer conception of God, and in this tribe or clan Moses, the deliverer of his people, was born. Providentially he escaped the death which awaited all Israelite boys in those days, and grew up in the camp of the enemies of his people. By this means he received all the culture that the best of the oppressors had, while the tie to Israel was neither obscured nor weakened in his mind. At the court of

Pharaoh he could not fail to acquire some notions of state-craft, and he must have seen that the first step towards anything great for his people must be their union and consolidation. But his earliest effort on their behalf showed that he had not really considered and weighed the magnitude of his task. Killing an Egyptian oppressor might conceivably have served as a signal for revolt. But in point of fact it frustrated any plans Moses might have had for the good of his people, and drove him into the wilderness. Here the germs of various thoughts which education and experience of life had deposited in his mind had time to develop and grow. According to the narrative, it was only at the end of his long sojourn in Midian that he had direct revelation from God. But amid the wide and awful solitudes of that wilderness land, as General Gordon said of himself in the kindred solitudes of the Soudan, he learned himself and God. Whatever deposits of higher faith he had received from his family, no doubt the long, silent broodings inseparable from a shepherd's life had increased and vivified it. Every possible aspect of it must have been reckoned with, all its consequences explored; and his great and solitary soul, we may be sure, had many a time let down soundings into the deeps which were, as yet, dark to him. And then—for it is to souls that have yearned after Him in the travail of intellectual and spiritual longing that God gives His great and splendid revelations—Yahweh revealed Himself in the flame of the bush, and gave him the final assurance and the first impulse for his life's work. It is a touch of reality in the narrative which can hardly be mistaken, that it represents Moses as shrinking from the responsibility which his call must lay upon him. Behind the few and simple objections in the narrative, we must picture to ourselves a whole world of thoughts and feelings into which the call of God had brought tumult

and confusion. One would need to be a dry-as-dust pedant not to see here, as in the case of Isaiah's call, the triumphant issue of a long conflict and the decisive moment of a victory over self, which had had already many stages of defeat and only partial success. It is perennially true to human nature and to the Divine dealings with human nature, that help from on high comes to establish and touch to finer issues that which the true man has striven for with all his powers.

Enlightened and assured by this great revelation of God, Moses left the quiet of the desert to undertake an extraordinarily difficult task. He had to weld jealous tribes into a nation; he had to rouse men whose courage had been broken by slavery and cruelty to undertake a dangerous revolt; and he had to prepare for the march of a whole population, burdened with invalids and infants, the feeble and the old, through a country which even to-day tries all but the strongest. These things had to be done; and the mere fact that they were accomplished would be inexplicable, without the domination of a great personality inspired by great ideas of a religious kind. For, in antiquity, the only bond able to hold incongruous elements together in one nationality was religion. With the people whom Moses had to lead the necessity would be the same, or even greater. But the political work which must have preceded any common action likewise demanded a great personality. Though no doubt a common misery might silence jealousies and make men eager to listen to any promises of deliverance, yet many troublesome negotiations must have been carried through successfully before these sentences could have been written with truth: "And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel, and the people believed, and bowed their heads and worshipped."

Many conjectures have been hazarded as to what the

centre of Moses' message at this time really was. Some, like Stade, bring it down to this, that Yahweh was the God of Israel. Others add to this somewhat meagre statement another equally meagre, that Israel was the people of Yahweh. But unless the character of Yahweh had been previously expounded to the people, there seems little in these two declarations to excite any enthusiasm or to kindle faith. The mere fact of inducing the tribes to put all other gods aside is insufficient to account for any of the results that followed, if to Moses Yahweh had remained simply a tribal God, of the same type as the gods of the Canaanites. On the other hand, if he had risen to the conception of God as a spirit, of Yahweh as the only living God, as the inspirer and defender of moral life, or even if he had made any large approach to these conceptions, it is easy to understand how the hearts of the mass of the people were stirred and filled, even though things so high were not, by the generality, thoroughly understood or long retained. But the hearts of all the chosen, the spiritually elect, would be moved by them as the leaves are moved by the wind. These, with Moses at their head, formed a nucleus which bore the people on through all their trials and dangers, and gradually leavened the mass to some extent with the same spirit.

Even after this had been accomplished, the main work remained to be done. We cannot agree indeed with many writers who seem to think that the whole life of the Israelite people was started anew by Moses. That would involve that every regulation for the most trivial detail of ordinary life was directly revealed, and that Moses made a *tabula rasa* of their minds, rubbing out all previous laws and customs, and writing a God-given constitution in their place. Obviously, that could hardly be; but still a task very different, yet almost as difficult, remained for Moses after his first success. His final aim was to make a

virtually new nation out of the Hebrew tribes; and their whole constitution and habits had, consequently, to be revised from the new religious standpoint. He and the nation alike had inherited a past, and it was no part of his mission to delete that. Reforms, to be stable, must have a root in the habits and thoughts of the people whom they concern. Moses would, consequently, uproot nothing that could be spared; he would plant nothing anew which was already flourishing, and was compatible with the new and dominant ideas he had introduced. A great mass of the laws and customs of the Hebrews must have been good, and suitable to the stage of moral advancement they had reached before Moses came to them. Any measure of civilised life involves so much as that. Another great mass, while lying outside of the religious sphere, must have been at least compatible with Yahwism. All laws and customs coming under these two categories, Moses would naturally adopt as part of the legislation of the new nation, and would stamp them with his approval as being in accord with the religion of Yahweh. They would thus acquire the same authority as if they were entirely new, given for the first time by the Divinely inspired lawgiver.

But besides these two classes of laws and customs there must have been a number which were so bound up with the lower religion that they could not be adopted. They would either be obstructive of the new ideas, or they would be positively hostile to them; for on any supposition heathenism of various sorts was largely mingled with the religion of the Israelite people before their deliverance, and even after it. To sift these out, and to replace them by others more in accord with the will of Yahweh as now revealed, must have been the chief work of the lawgiver. In that more or less protracted period before Israel came to Sinai, during which Moses burdened himself with

judging the people personally, he must have been doing this work. His reflections in the wilderness had doubtless prepared him for it. In a mind like his, the fruitful principles received by the inspiration of the Almighty could not be merely passively held. Like St. Paul in his Arabian sojourn, we must believe that Moses in Midian would work out the results of these principles in many directions; and when he led Israel forth, he must have been clearly conscious of changes that were indispensable. But it needed close every-day contact with the life of the people to bring out all the incompatibilities which he would have to remove. Every day unexpected complications would arise; and the people at any rate, if Moses himself be supposed to be raised by his inspiration above the needs of experience, would be able to receive the instruction they needed only in concrete examples, here a little and there a little. When they came to "seek Yahweh" in any matter which perplexed them, Moses gave them Yahweh's mind on the subject; and each decision tended to purify and render innocuous to their higher life some department of public or private affairs. Every day at that early time must have been a day of instruction how to apply the principles of the higher faith just revived. The better minds among the chiefs were thereby trained to an appreciation of the new point of view; and when Jethro suggested that the burden of this work should be divided, quite a sufficient number were found prepared to carry it on. After this it must have gone on with tenfold speed, and we may believe that when Sinai was reached the preliminaries on the human side to the great revelation had been thoroughly elaborated. The Divine presence had been with Moses day by day, judging, deciding, inspiring in all their individual concerns as well as in their common affairs. But that would only bring out more clearly the extent of the reformation

that remained to be wrought; doubtless too it had revealed the dulness of heart in regard to the Divine which has always characterised the mass of men. The need for a more complete revelation, a more extended and detailed legislation on the new basis, must have been greatly felt. In the great scene at Sinai, a scene so strange and awe-inspiring that to the latest days of Israel the memory of it thrilled every Israelite heart and exalted every Israelite imagination, this need was adequately met.

In connection with it Moses rose to new heights of intimacy with the Divine. What he had already done was ratified, and in the Decalogue the great lines of moral and social life were marked out for the people. But the most remarkable thing to us, in the narrative of the circle of events which made the mountain of the law for ever memorable, is the sublimity attributed to the character of Moses. From the day when he smote the Egyptian, at every glimpse we have of him we find him always advancing in power of character. The shepherd of Midian is nobler, less self-assertive, more overawed by communion with God, than the son of Pharaoh's daughter, noble as he was. Again, the religious reformer, the popular leader, who needs the very insistence of God to make him lead, who speaks for God with such courageous majesty, who teaches, inspires, and manages a turbulent nation with such conspicuous patience, self-repression, and success, is greatly more impressive than the Moses of Midianite days. But it is here, at Sinai, that his rank among the leaders of men is fixed for ever. To the people of that time God was above all things terrible; and when they came to the mount and found that "there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud," they could only tremble. Their very fear made it impossible for them to understand what God desired to reveal concerning

Himself. But in Moses love had cast out fear. Even to him, doubtless, the darkness was terrible, because it expressed only too well the mystery which enwrapped the end of the Divine purposes of which he alone had seen the beginnings; even his mind must have been clouded thick with doubts as to whither Yahweh was leading him and his people; yet he went boldly forth to seek God, venturing all upon that errand.

In previous perplexities the narrative represents Moses as calling instantly upon Yahweh; but now, when experience had taught him the formidable nature of his task, when difficulties had increased upon him, when his perplexities of all kinds must have been simply overwhelming, he heard the voice of Yahweh calling him to Himself. Straightway he went into solitary communion with Him; and when he passed with satisfied heart from that communion, he brought with him those immortal words of the Decalogue which, amid all changes since, have been acknowledged to be the true foundation for moral and spiritual life. He brought too a commission authorising him to give laws and judgments to his people in accord with what he had heard and seen on the mount. However we are to understand the details of the narrative therefore, its meaning is that at this time, and under these circumstances, Moses attained his maximum of inspiration as a seer or prophet, and from that time onward stood in a more intimate relation to God than any of the prophets and saints of Israel who came after him. He had found God; and from where he stood with God he saw the paths of religious and political progress plainly marked out.

Henceforth he was competent to guide the nation he had made as he had not yet been, and with his power to help them his eagerness to do so grew. Twice during this great crisis of his life the people broke away into evil, and national death was threatened. But with passionate

supplications for their pardon he threw himself down between God and them. At precisely the moment when his communion with God was most complete, he rose to the loving recklessness of desiring that if they were to be destroyed he might perish with them. Strangely enough, though the author of Deuteronomy had this before him, he does not mention it. It cannot have struck even him as the crowning point of Moses' career, as it does us. Even in his day the fitness, nay, the necessity, of this self-sacrificing spirit as the fruit of deeper knowledge of God, was not yet felt; much less could it have been felt in the days of the earlier historians. There must, therefore, be reliable information here as to what Moses actually did. Such love as this was not part of the Israelite ideal at the time of our narrative, and from nothing but knowledge of the fact could it have been attributed to Moses. We may rank this enthusiasm of love, therefore, as a reliable trait in his character. But if it be so, how far must he in his highest moments have transcended his contemporaries, and even the best of his successors, in knowledge of the inmost nature of God! His thought was so far above them that it remained fruitless for many centuries. Jeremiah's life and death first prepared the way for its appreciation, but only in the character of the Servant of Yahweh in Second Isaiah is it surpassed. Now if in this deepest part of true religion Moses possessed such exceptional spiritual insight, it is vain to attempt to show that his conception of God was so low, and his aim for man so limited, as modern theorists suppose. The truth must lie rather with those who, like Dr. A. B. Davidson,[1] see in him "a profoundly reverential ancient mind with thoughts of God so broad that mankind has added little to them. Nothing in the way of sublimity of view would

[1] "Moses' God," *British Weekly*, February 2, 1893.

be incongruous with such a character, while nothing could be more grotesque than to shut it up within the limits of the gross conceptions of the mass of the people. He was their guiding star, not their fellow, in all that concerned God, and his religious conceptions were by a whole heaven removed from theirs. The entire tragedy of his life just consisted in this, that he had to strive with a turbulent and gainsaying people, had to bear with them and train them, had to be content with scarcely perceptible advances, where his strenuous guidance and his patient love should have kindled them to *run* in the way of God's commandments. But though their progress was lamentably slow, he gave them an impulse they were never to lose. Under the inspiration of the Almighty he so fixed their fundamental ideas about God that they never henceforth could get free of his spiritual company. In all their progress afterwards they felt the impress of his mind, moulding and shaping them even when they knew it not, and through them he started in the world that redemptive work of God which manifested its highest power in Jesus Christ."

From this point onward the idea of Moses that Deuteronomy gives us is that of a great popular leader, meeting with extraordinary calmness all the crises of government, and guiding his people with unwavering steadfastness. Without power, except that which his relation to God and the choice of the people gave him, without any official title, he simply dominated the Israelites as long as he lived. And the secret of his success is plainly told us in the narrative. He would not move a single step without Divine guidance (Exod. xxxiii. 12): "And Moses said unto the Lord, See, Thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: but Thou hast not let me know whom Thou wilt send with me." (Ver. 14) "And He said, Must I go in person with thee and bring thee to thy place of rest?

And Moses said, If Thou dost not go with us in person, then rather lead us not away hence." That can only mean that he laid aside self-will, that he put away personal sensitiveness, that he had learned to feel himself unsafe when vanity or self-regard asserted themselves in his decisions, that he sought continually that detachment of view which absolute devotion to the Highest always gives. It means also that he knew how dark and dull his own vision was, that clouds and darkness would always be about him, and that it would be impossible for him to choose his path, unless he knew what the Divine plan for his people was. And all that is narrated of him afterward shows that his prayer was granted. His patience under trial has been handed down to us as a marvel. Though his brother and sister rebelled against him, he won them again entirely to himself. Though a faction among the people rose against his authority under Dathan and Abiram, his power was not even shaken. Amid all the perversity and childish fickleness of Israel he kept them true to their choice of the desert, "that great and terrible wilderness," as against Egypt with the flesh-pots. He kept alive their faith in the promise of Yahweh to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, and what was more and greater than that, their faith in Him as their Redeemer. By his intercourse with Yahweh he was upheld from falling away from his own ideals, as so many leaders of nations have done, or from despairing of them.

The complaints and perversities of the people did however force him into sin; and perhaps we may take it that the outbreak of petulance when he smote the rock was only one instance of some general decay of character on that side, or perhaps one should rather say, of some general falling away from the self-restraint which had distinguished him. It seems strange that this one failure

should have been punished in him, by exclusion from the land he had so steadfastly believed in, the land which most of those who actually entered it would never have seen but for him. And it is pathetic to find him among that great company of martyrs for the public good, those who in order to serve their people have neglected their own characters. Under the stress of public work and the pressure of the stupidity and greed of those whom they have sought to guide, many leaders of men have been tempted, and have yielded to the temptation, to forget the demands of their better nature. But whatever their services to the world, such unfaithfulness does not pass unpunished. They have to bear the penalty, whosoever they be; and Moses was no more an exception than Cromwell or Savonarola was, to mention only some of the nobler examples. He had been courageous when others had faltered. He had been pre-eminently just; for in founding the judicial system of Israel he had guarded alike against the tyranny of the great and against unjust favour to the small. He had laid a firm hand upon the education of youth, determined that the best inheritance of their people, the knowledge of the laws of Yahweh and of His providences, should not be lost to them. He had cleared their religion in principle of all that was unworthy of Yahweh, and he had by resolute valour, and by uncompromising sternness to enemies, brought his great task to a successful issue. But the reward of it all, the entrance into the land he had virtually won for his people, was denied to him. It is one of the laws of the Divine government of the world, that with those to whom God specially draws near He is more rigorous than with others. Amos clearly saw and proclaimed this principle (Amos iii. 2). "Hear this word that Yahweh hath spoken against you, children of Israel," he says; "You only have I known of all the families of the

earth : *therefore* I will visit upon you all your iniquities." The pathetic picture of the aged lawgiver, judge, and prophet, beseeching God in vain that he might share in the joy which was freely bestowed upon so many less known and less worthy than he, pushes home that strenuous teaching. For his sin he died with his last earnest wish unfulfilled, and it was sadly longing eyes that death's finger touched. We remember also that, so far as we can judge, he had no certain hope of a future life other than the shadowy existence of Hades. "Though he slay me yet will I trust him" had a much more tragic meaning for Old Testament saints than it can ever have for us, for whom Christ has brought life and immortality to light. Yet, with a so much heavier burden, and with so much less of gracious support, they played their high part. That solitary figure on the mountain-top, about to die with the fulfilment of his passionate last wish denied him by his God, must shame us into silence when we fret because our hopes have perished. All those nations which have had that figure on their horizon have been permanently enriched in nature by it. In a thousand ways it has shot forth instructions; but, above all, it has made men worthy in their own eyes; for it has been a continuous reminder that God can and ought to be served unfalteringly, even when the reward we wish is denied us, and when every other consolation is dim.

But the question may now arise, Is not this character of Moses which the author of Deuteronomy partly had before him and partly helped to elaborate, too exalted to be reliable? Can we suppose that a man in Moses' day and circumstances could actually have entertained such thoughts, and have possessed such a character as we have been depicting? In essentials it would appear to be quite possible. Putting aside all distracting questions about details, and remembering that it is a mere super-

stition to suppose that the wants and appliances of civilisation are necessary to loftiness of character and depth of thought, where is there anything in the situation of Moses which should make this view of him incredible? No doubt there was a rudeness in his surroundings which must necessarily have affected his nature; and the forms of his thinking in that early, though by no means primitive, time must have differed greatly from ours. Moreover, as an instrument for scientific inquiry and for the verification of facts, the human mind must have been greatly less effective then than it is to-day. But none of these things have much influence upon a man's capacity to receive a new and inspiring revelation as to God. Otherwise no child could be a Christian. As regards the rudeness of his surroundings, we must not consciously or unconsciously degrade him to the level of a modern Bedouin. Among the host he led, some doubtless were at that level; but the bulk of Israel must have been above it; and Moses himself, from his circumstances and his natural endowment, must have stood side by side with the most cultured men of his time. Whatever ignorance or error in science he may have been capable of, and however rude, according to our ideas, his manner of life, there was nothing in these to shut him out from spiritual truth. That which Prof. Henry Morley has finally said of Dante[1] must have been true, *mutatis mutandis*, of a man like Moses. "Dante's knowledge is the knowledge of his time," but "if spiritual truth only came from right and perfect knowledge, this would have been a world of dead souls from the first to now, for future centuries in looking back at us will wonder at the little faulty knowledge that we think so much. But let the *known* be what it may, the true soul rises from it to a sense of the Divine mysteries

[1] *Convito of Dante*, Morley's *Universal Library*, Introduction, pp. 6 ff.

of wisdom and love. Dante's knowledge may be full of ignorance, and so is ours. But he fills it as he can with the spirit of God." In the East this is even more conspicuously true, even to this day. What an Israelite under similar conditions might be is seen in the prophet Amos. His external condition was of the poorest—a gatherer of sycamore fruit must have been poor even for the East—yet he knew accurately the history, not only of his own people, but of the surrounding nations, and brooded on the purpose of God in regard to his own people and the world, till he became a fit recipient of prophetic inspirations. But indeed the whole history of Christianity is a demonstration of this truth. From the first days, when "not many mighty, not many noble were being called," when it was specially the message to listening slaves, the religion of Christ has had its greatest triumphs among the "poor of the world, rich in faith," but in nothing else. These have not only believed it, but they have lived it, and amid the meanest and rudest surroundings, with the most limited outlook, have built up characters often of even resplendent virtue. Whatever primitiveness we may fairly ascribe, therefore, to the life and surroundings of Moses, that is no reason why we should think it incredible that he had received lofty spiritual truth from God. If he did such things for Israel as we have seen, if, as almost all admit, he actually made a nation, and planted the seeds of a religion of which Christianity is the natural complement and crown, then the view that he had a greatly higher idea of God than those about him is not only credible but necessary. If his teaching concerning Yahweh had amounted only to this, that He was the only God Israel was to worship, and that they were to be solely His people, then on such a basis nothing more than the ordinary heathen civilisations of the Semitic people could have been built. But

if he had the thought of God which is embodied in the Decalogue, that could bring with it everything in the character of Moses that seems too high for those early days. The knowledge of God as a spiritual and moral being could not fail to moralise and spiritualise the man. The lofty conception of human duty, the submission to the will of God, the passionate love for his nation which made personal loss nothing to Moses, may well have been evoked by the great truth which formed his prophetic revelation.

But the narrative itself, considered merely as a history, is of such a nature as to give confidence that it rests upon some record of an actual life. Ideal sketches of great men (setting aside the products of modern fictive art) are much more uniform and superficially coherent than this character of Moses. The purpose of the writer either to exalt or to decry carries all before it, and we get from such a source pictures of character so consistent that they cannot possibly be true. Here, however, we have nothing of that kind. Rashnesses and weaknesses are narrated, and even Moses' good qualities are manifested in unexpected ways in response to unexpected evils in the people. The mere fact, also, that his grave was unknown is indicative of truth. Though it would be absurd to say that wherever we have the graves of great men pointed out, there we have a mythical story, it is nevertheless true that in the case of every name or character which has come largely under the influence of the myth-making spirit, the grave has been made much of. The Arabian imagination here seems to be typical of the Semitic imagination; and in all Moslem lands the graves of the prophets and saints of the Old Testament are pointed out with great reverence, even, or perhaps we should say especially, if they be eighty feet long. Though a well-authenticated tomb of Moses, therefore, would have been

a proof of his real existence and life among men, the absence of any is a stronger proof of the sobriety and truth of the narrative. That with the goal in sight, and with his great work about to come to fruition, he should have turned away into the solitude of the mountains to die, is so very unlikely to occur to the mind of the writer of an ideal life of an ideal leader, that only some tradition of this as a fact can account for it. The unexpectedness of such an end to a hero's career is the strongest evidence of its truth.

The result of all the indications is that the story of Moses, as the author of Deuteronomy knew it, rests upon authentic information handed down somehow, probably in written documents, from the earliest time. Apart from the question of inspiration, therefore, we may rest upon it as reliable in all essentials. Only in him, and the revelation he received, have we an adequate cause for the great upheaval of religious feeling which shaped and characterised all the after-history of Israel.

THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY: THE BOOK OF JOSHUA.

WITH a purely historical book like Joshua before us, it is of importance to keep in view two ways of regarding Old Testament history, in accordance with one or other of which any exposition of such a book must be framed.

According to one of these views, the historical books of Scripture, being given by inspiration of God, have for their *main* object not to tell the story or dwell on the fortunes of the Hebrew nation, but to unfold God's progressive revelation of Himself made to the seed of Abraham, and to record the way in which that revelation was received, and the effects which it produced. The story of the Hebrew nation is but the frame in which this Divine revelation is set. It was God's pleasure to reveal Himself not through a formal treatise, but in connection with the history of a nation, through announcements and institutions and practical dealings bearing in the first instance on them. The historical books of the Hebrews therefore, while they give us an excellent view of the progress of the nation, must be studied in connection with God's main purpose, and the supernatural interpositions by which from time to time it was carried out.

The other view regards the historical books of the Hebrews in much the same light as we look on those of

other nations. Whatever may have been their origin, they are, as we find them, like other books, and our purpose in dealing with them should be the same as in dealing with books of similar contents. We are to deal with them, in the first instance at least, from a natural point of view. We are to regard them as recording the history and development of an ancient nation—a very remarkable nation, no doubt, but a nation whose progress may be referred to ascertainable causes. If we find natural causes sufficient to account for that progress, we are not to call in supernatural. It is an acknowledged law, at least as old as Lord Bacon, that no more causes are to be assigned for phenomena than are true and sufficient to account for them. This law, and the investigations which have taken place under it, have expunged much that used to be regarded as supernatural from the history of other nations; and it will only be according to analogy if the same result is reached in connection with the history of Israel.

In this spirit we have recently had several treatises dealing with that history from a purely natural standpoint. Very earnest endeavours have been made to clear the atmosphere, to expiscate facts, to apply the laws of history, to weigh statements in the balances of probability, to reduce the Hebrew history to the principles of science. The general effect of this method has been to bring out results very different from those previously accepted. In particular, there has been a thorough elimination of the supernatural from Hebrew history. Natural causes have been judged sufficient to explain all that occurred. The introduction of the supernatural in the narrative was due to those obvious causes that have operated in the case of other nations

and other religions :—love of the mythical, a patriotic desire to glorify the nation, the exaggerating tendency of tradition, and readiness to translate symbolical pictures into statements of literal occurrences. Hebrew historians were not exempted from the tendencies and weaknesses of other historians, and were ready enough to colour and apply their narratives according to their own views. It is when we subject the Hebrew books to such principles as these (such writers tell us) that we get at the real history of the nation, deprived no doubt of much of the glory with which it has usually been invested, but now for the first time reliable history, on which the most scientific may depend. And as to its moral purpose, it is just the moral purpose that runs through the scheme of the world, to show that, amid much conflict and confusion, the true, the good, the just, and the merciful become victorious in the end over the false and the evil.

The difference between the two methods, as an able writer remarks, is substantially this, that "the one regards the Hebrew books as an unfolding of God's nature, and the other as an unfolding of the nature of man."

The naturalistic method claims emphatically to be scientific. It reduces all events to historical law, and finds for them a natural explanation. But what if the natural explanation is no explanation? What becomes of the claim to be scientific if the causes assigned are not sufficient to account for the phenomena? If science will not tolerate unnatural causes, no more should it tolerate unnatural effects. A truly scientific method must show a fit proportion between cause and effect. Our contention is that, in this respect, the naturalistic method is a failure. In many instances its

causes are wholly inadequate to the effects. We are compelled to fall back on the supernatural, otherwise we are confronted with a long series of occurrences for which no reasonable explanation can be found.

We are reminded of an incident which a popular writer, under the *nom de plume* of Edna Lyall, has introduced in a novel, bearing the title "We Two." Erica, the daughter of an atheist, assists her father in conducting a journal. She gets from him for review a Life of David Livingstone, with instructions to leave his religion entirely out. As she proceeds with the work, she becomes convinced that the condition is impossible. To describe Livingstone without his religion would be like playing *Hamlet* without the part of Hamlet. Not only does she find her task impossible, but when she comes to an incident where Livingstone, in most imminent danger of his life, gets entire composure of mind from an act of devotion, she becomes convinced that this could not have happened had there not been an objective reality corresponding to his belief; and she is an atheist no more. Erica now believes in God. *Se non e vero e bene trovato.*

In like manner, we believe that to delineate Old Testament history without reference to the supernatural is as impossible as to describe Livingstone apart from his religion. You are baffled in trying to explain actual events. Long ago, Edward Gibbon tried to account for the rapid progress and brilliant success of Christianity in the early centuries by what he called secondary causes. It was really an attempt to eliminate the supernatural from early Christian history. But the five causes which he specified were really not causes, but effects,—effects of that supernatural action which had its source in the supernatural person of Jesus

Christ. These "secondary causes" never could have existed had not Jesus Christ already commended Himself to all sorts of men as a Divine Saviour, sent by God to bless the world. In like manner we maintain that behind the causes by which our naturalistic historians attempt to explain the remarkable history of the Jewish people, there lay a supernatural force, but for which the Hebrews would not have been essentially different from the Edomites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, or any other Semitic tribe in their neighbourhood. It was the supernatural element underlying Hebrew history that made it the marvellous development it was; and that element began at the beginning, and continued more or less actively till Jesus Christ came in the flesh.

Let us try to make good this position. Let us select a few of the more remarkable occurrences of early Hebrew history, and, in the language of Gibbon, make "a candid and reasonable inquiry" whether or not they can be accounted for, on the ordinary principles of human nature, without a supernatural cause.

1. It is certain that from the earliest times, and during at least the first four centuries of their history, the Hebrew people had an immovable conviction that the land of Canaan was divinely destined to be theirs. Of the singular hold which this conviction took of the minds of the patriarchs, we have innumerable proofs. Abraham leaves the rich plains of Chaldæa to dwell in Canaan, and spends a hundred years in it, a stranger and a pilgrim, without having a single acre of his own. When he sends to Padan Aram for a wife to Isaac he conjures his servant on no account to listen to any proposal that Isaac should settle there; the damsel must at all hazards come to Canaan,

When Jacob determines to part from Laban, he sets his face resolutely towards his native land across the Jordan, although his injured brother is there, thirsting as he knows for his blood. When Joseph sends for his father to go down to Egypt, Jacob must get Divine permission at Beersheba before he can comfortably go. Joseph, for his services to Egypt, might reasonably have looked for a magnificent tomb in that country to cover his remains and perpetuate his memory; but, strange to say, he prefers to remain unburied for an indefinite time, and leaves a solemn charge to his people to bury him in Canaan, carrying his bones with them when they leave Egypt. In the bitterness of their oppression by Pharaoh it would have been much more feasible for their champions, Moses and Aaron, to try to obtain a relaxation of their burdens; but their demand was a singular one—liberty to go into the wilderness, with the hardly concealed purpose of escaping to the land of their affections. Goshen was a goodly land, but Canaan had a dearer name—it was the land of their fathers, and of their brightest hopes. The uniform tradition was, that the God whom Abraham worshipped had promised to give the land to his posterity, and along with the land other blessings of mysterious but glorious import. With this promise was connected that Messianic hope which like a golden thread ran through all Hebrew history and literature, brightening it more and more as the ages advanced.

It is vain to account for this extraordinary faith in the land as theirs, and this remarkable assurance that it would be the scene of unwonted blessing, apart from a supernatural communication from God. To suppose that it originated in some whim or fancy of Abraham's or in the saga of some old bard like Thomas the Rhymer,

and continued unimpaired century after century, is to suppose what was never realized in the history of any people. In vain do we look among natural causes for any that could have so impressed itself on a whole nation, and swayed their whole being for successive ages with irresistible force. That "God spake to Abraham to give him the land" was the indefeasible conviction of his descendants; nor could any consideration less powerful have sustained their hopes, or nerved them to the efforts and perils needful to realize it.

2. No more can the leaving of Egypt, with all that followed, be accounted for without supernatural agency. It is the contention of the naturalistic historian that the Israelites were very much fewer in number than the Scripture narrative alleges. But if so, how could an empire, with such immense resources as the monuments show Egypt to have had, have been unable to retain them? Wellhausen affirms that at the time Egypt was weakened by a pestilence. We know not his authority for the statement; but if the Egyptians were weakened, the Israelites (unless supernaturally protected) must have been weakened too. Make what we may of the contest between Moses and Pharaoh, it is beyond dispute that Pharaoh's pride was thoroughly roused, and that his firm determination was not to let the children of Israel go. And if we grant that his six hundred chariots were lost by some mishap in the Red Sea, what were these to the immense forces at his disposal, and what was there to hinder him from mustering a new force, and attacking the fugitives in the wilderness of Sinai? Pharaoh himself does not seem to have entered the sea with his soldiers, and was therefore free to take other steps. How, then, are we to account for the sudden abandonment of the campaign?

3. And as to the residence in the wilderness, even if we suppose that the Israelites were much fewer in number than is stated, they were far too great a multitude to be supported from the scanty resources of the desert. The wilderness already had its inhabitants, as Moses knew right well from his experience as a shepherd; it had its Midianites and Amalekites and other pastoral tribes, by whom the best of its pastures were eagerly appropriated for the maintenance of their flocks. How, in addition to these, were the hosts of Israel to obtain support?

4. And how are we to explain the extraordinary route which they took? Why did they not advance towards Canaan by the ordinary way—the wilderness of Shur, Beersheba, and Hebron? Why cross the Red Sea at all, or have anything to do with Mount Sinai and its awful cliffs, which a glance at the map will show was entirely out of their way? And when they did take that route, what would have been easier than for Pharaoh, if he had chosen to follow them with a new force, to hem them in among these tremendous mountains, and massacre or starve them at his pleasure? If the Israelites had no supernatural power to fall back on, their whole course was simply madness. We may talk of good fortune extricating men from difficulties, but what fortune that can be conceived could have availed a people, professing to be bound for the land of Canaan, that, without food or drink or stores of any kind, had wandered into the heart of a vast labyrinth, for no reasonable purpose under the sun?

5. Nor can the career of Moses be made intelligible without a supernatural backing. The contention is, that the desire of the people in Egypt for deliverance having become very strong, especially in the tribe of

Levi, they sent Aaron to find Moses, remembering his former attempt on their behalf; and that, under the able leadership of Moses, their deliverance was secured by natural means. But does this explain the actual campaign in Sinai? Who ever heard of a leader that, after he had roused the enthusiasm of his people by a brilliant deliverance, arrested their further progress in order to preach to them for a twelvemonth, and give them a system of law? Did Moses not possess that instinct of a general that must have urged him to push on the moment the Egyptians were drowned, and amid the enthusiasm of his own troops and the consternation of the Canaanites, fling his army upon the seven nations, and seize their land by a *coup de main*? Abraham before him and Joshua after him found the value of such prompt, sudden movements. Never had a leader a more splendid opportunity. What could have induced Moses to throw away his chance, bury his people among the mountains, and remain inactive for months upon months? Is there any conceivable explanation but that he acted by supernatural direction? The Divine plan was entirely different from any that human wisdom would have contrived. It is as clear as day that, had there been no Divine power controlling the movement, the course taken by Moses would have been simply insane.

6. Nor could the law of Moses, first given in such circumstances, have acquired the glory which surrounded it ever after, had there been no manifestation of the Divine presence at Sinai. The people were greatly dissatisfied, especially at their delays. The only course that would have quieted them was to push on towards Canaan, so that their minds might be animated by the enthusiasm of hope. Under their detentions

they greedily seized every occasion that presented itself for growling against Moses. How little they were in sympathy with his ideas of religion and worship was apparent from the affair of the golden calf. The history of the time is an almost unbroken record of murmuring, complaining, and rebellion. Yet the law which originated with Moses in these circumstances became the very idol of the people, and, according to the naturalistic historians, was the means of creating the nation, and welding the tribes into a living unity! We can quite easily understand how, in spite of all their growlings, the law as given at Sinai should have taken the firmest hold of their imagination and kindled their utmost enthusiasm in the end, if it was accompanied by those tokens of the Divine presence which the whole literature of the Hebrews assumes. And if Moses was closely identified with the Divine Being, the surpassing glory of the occasion must have been reflected on him. But to suppose that a discontented people should have had their enthusiasm roused for the law simply because this Moses commanded them to observe it, and that they should ever after have counted it the holiest, the most Divine law that men had ever known, is again to postulate an effect without a cause, and to suppose a whole people acting in disregard of the strongest propensities of human nature.

7. Then, as to the generalship of Moses. How are we to explain the further detention of the people in the wilderness for nearly forty years? If this was not the result of a supernatural Divine decree, it must have proceeded from the inability of Moses to lead the people to victory. No people who had struggled out of bondage in order to enter a land flowing with milk and honey, would of their own accord have spent forty

years in the wilderness. At Hormah, they were willing to fight, but Moses would not lead them, and they were beaten. Either the wandering of the forty years was a Divine punishment, or the generalship of Moses was at fault. He abandoned himself to inaction for an unprecedented period. There was no shadow of benefit to be gained by this delay; nothing could come of it (apart from the Divine purpose) but wearing out the patience of the people, and killing them with the sickness of hope deferred. And if it should be said that the forty years' wandering was a myth, and that probably the wilderness sojourn did not exceed a year or two at most, is it conceivable that any people in its senses would invent such a legend?—a legend that covered them with shame, and that was felt to be so disgraceful that the whole region was shunned by them; insomuch that with the exception of Elijah, we do not read of any member of the nation ever making a pilgrimage to the spot which otherwise must have had overwhelming attractions.

8. At last Moses suddenly awakes to activity and courage. And the next difficulty is to account for his success at the eleventh hour of his life, if he had no supernatural help. No phrase occurs more frequently in naturalistic explanations than "it is likely." Likelihood is the touchstone to which all extraordinary statements are brought, although, as Lord Beaconsfield used to tell us, "it is the unexpected that happens." Borrowing the touchstone for the nonce, we may ask, Is it likely that, after a sleep of eight-and-thirty years, Moses of his own accord, without any apparent change of circumstances, sprang suddenly to his feet, and urged the people to attempt the invasion of the land? Is it likely that all the inertia and fears of the people vanished in

a moment, as if at the touch of a magician's wand? And when it came to actual fighting, is it likely that these shepherds of the desert were able of themselves not only to stand before a trained and successful warrior like Sihon King of the Amorites, who had so lately overrun the country, but to defeat him utterly and take possession of his whole territory? Is it likely that Sihon's neighbour, Og King of Bashan, though warned by the fate of Sihon, and therefore sure to make a more careful defence, shared the fate of the other king? Or if Og was a mere myth, as Wellhausen strangely maintains, is it likely that the Israelites got possession of the powerful cities and well-defended kingdom of Bashan without striking a blow? Is it likely that, after this brilliant victory, Moses, who was still in full vigour, detained them again for weeks to preach old sermons, and sing them songs, and make pathetic speeches, instead of dashing at once at the petrified people on the other side, and acquiring the great prize—Western Palestine? Strange mortal this Moses must have been!—wise enough to give the people an unexampled constitution and system of laws, and yet blind to the most obvious laws of military science, and the most elementary perceptions of common sense.

And now we come to Joshua, and to the book that records his achievements.

Joshua was no prophet; he made no claim to the prophetic character; he succeeded Moses only as military leader. Consequently the Book of Joshua contains little matter that would fall under the term "revelation." But both the work of Joshua and the book of Joshua served an important purpose in the plan of Divine manifestation, inasmuch as they showed

God fulfilling His old promises, vindicating His faithfulness, and laying anew a foundation for the trust of His people. In this point of view, both the work and the book have an importance that cannot be exaggerated. The naturalistic historian regards the book as merely setting forth, with sundry traditional embellishments, the manner in which one people ousted another from their country, much as those who were then evicted had dispossessed the previous inhabitants. But whoever believes that, centuries before, God made a solemn promise to Abraham to give that land to his seed, must see in the story of the settlement the unfolding of a Divine purpose, and a solemn pledge of blessings to come. "The Ancient of days," who "declares the end from the beginning," is seen to be faithful to His promises; and if He has been thus faithful in the past, he may surely be trusted to be faithful in the future.

If, then, Joshua's work was a continuation of the work of Moses, and his book of the books of Moses, both must be regarded from the same point of view. You cannot explain either of them reasonably in a merely rationalistic sense. Joshua could no more have settled the people in Canaan by merely natural means than Moses could have delivered them from Pharaoh and maintained them for years in the wilderness. In the history of both you see a Divine arm, and in the books of both you find a chapter of Divine revelation. It is this that gives full credibility to the miracles which they record. What happened under Joshua formed a most important chapter of the process of revelation by which God made Himself known to Israel. In such circumstances, miracles were not out of place. But if the Book of Joshua is nothing more than the record of a

raid by one nation on another, miracles were uncalled for, and must be given up.

Rationalists may count us wrong in believing that the Hebrew historical books are more than Hebrew annals—are the records of a Divine manifestation. But they cannot hold us unreasonable or inconsistent if, believing this, we believe in the miracles which the books record. Miracles assume a very different character when they are connected into a sublime purpose in the economy of God; when they signalize a great epoch in the history of revelation—the completion of a great era of promise, the fulfilment of hopes delayed for centuries. The Book of Joshua has thus a far more dignified place in the history of revelation than a superficial observer would suppose. And those historians who bring it down to the level of a mere record of an invasion, and who leave out of account its bearing on Divine transactions so far back as the days of Abraham, spoil it of its chief glory and value for the Church in every age. There is nothing of more importance, whether for the individual believer or for the Church collectively, than a firm conviction, such as the Book of Joshua emphatically supplies, that long delays on God's part involve no forgetfulness of His promises, but that whenever the destined moment comes "no good thing will fail of all that He hath spoken."

The Book of Joshua consists mainly of two parts; one historical, the other geographical. It was the old belief that it was the work of a single writer, with such slight revision at an after time as a writing might receive without essential interference with its substance. The author was sometimes supposed to be Joshua himself, but more commonly one of the priests or elders

who outlived Joshua, and who might therefore fitly record his death. It has been remarked that there are several traces in the book of contemporary origin, like the remark on Rahab—"She dwelleth in Israel even unto this day" (vi. 25). It must be allowed, we think, that there is not much in this book to suggest to the ordinary reader either the idea of a late origin or of the use of late materials.

But recent critics have taken a different view. Ewald maintained that, besides the Jehovist and Elohist writers of whose separate contributions in Genesis the evidence seems incontrovertible, there were three other authors of Joshua, with one or more redactors or revisers. The view of Kuenen and Wellhausen is similar, but with this difference, that the Book of Joshua shows so much affinity, both in object and style, to the preceding five books, that it must be classed with them, as setting forth the origin of the Jewish nation, which would not have been complete without a narrative of their settlement in their land. The composition of Joshua is therefore to be brought down to a late date; we owe it to the documents, writers, and editors concerned in the composition of the Pentateuch; and instead of following the Jews in classing the first five books by themselves, we ought to include Joshua along with them, and in place of the Pentateuch speak of the Hexateuch. Canon Driver substantially accepts this view; in his judgment, the first part of the book rests mainly on the JE (Jehovist-Elohist) document, with slight additions from P (the priestly code) and D^2 (the second Deuteronomist). The second half of the book is derived mainly from the priestly code. But Canon Driver has the candour to say that it is much more difficult to distinguish the writers in Joshua than in the earlier

books; and so little is he sure of his ground that even such important documents as J and E have to be designated by new letters, *a* and *b*. But, all the same, he goes right on with his scheme, furnishing us with tables all through, in which he shows that the Book of Joshua consists of ninety different pieces, no two consecutive pieces being by the same author. Most of it he refers to three earlier writings, but some of these were composite, and it is hard to say how many hands were engaged in putting together this simple story.

One is tempted to say of this complicated but confidently maintained scheme, that it is just too complete, too wonderfully finished, too clever by half. Allowing most cordially the remarkable ability and ingenuity of its authors, we can hardly be expected to concede to them the power of taking to pieces a book of such vast antiquity, putting it in a modern mincing machine, dividing it among so many supposed writers, and settling the exact parts of it written by each! Is there any ancient writing that might not yield a similar result if the same ingenuity were exercised upon it?

To judge of the source of writings by apparent varieties of style, and call in a different writer for every such variety, is to commit oneself to a very precarious rule. There are doubtless cases where the diversity of style is so marked that the inference is justified, but in these the evidence is unmistakably clear. Often the evidence against identity of authorship *appears* very clear, while it is absolutely worthless. Suppose that three thousand years hence an English book should be found, consisting, first, of an eloquent exposition of a parliamentary budget; secondly, a scheme for Home Rule in Ireland; thirdly, a dissertation on

Homer; and fourthly, essays on the "Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture"—how convincingly might the critics of the day demonstrate, beyond possibility of contradiction, that the book could not be the work of the single man who bore the name of William E. Gladstone! In like manner, it might be made very plain that Milton could never have written both "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," or "Paradise Lost" and the "Defence of the English People." Cowper could not have written "John Gilpin" and "God moves in a mysterious way." Samuel Rutherford could not have written his "Letters" and his "Divine Right of Church Government." Moreover, in the course of years a writer may change his style, even when his subject is the same. The earlier essays of Mr. Carlyle show no traces of that most quaint, terse, graphic style which became one of his outstanding characteristics in later years. Perhaps the most remarkable instance of change of style in a great writer is that of Jeremy Bentham. In Sir James Mackintosh's Dissertation prefixed to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (eighth edition) he says: "The style of Mr. Bentham underwent a more remarkable revolution than perhaps befell that of any other celebrated writer. In his early works, it was clear, free, spirited, often and seasonably eloquent. . . . He gradually ceased to use words for conveying his thoughts to others, but merely employed them as a short hand to preserve his meaning for his own purpose. It is no wonder that his language thus became obscure and repulsive. Though many of his technical terms are in themselves exact and pithy, yet the overflow of his vast nomenclature was enough to darken his whole diction."

If we compare the criticism of the Book of Joshua with that (let us say) of Genesis, the difference in the

clearness of the conclusions is very great. By far the most striking basis of the criticism of Genesis is the feature that was noticed first—the occurrence of different Divine names, Elohim and Jehovah, in different portions of the book. Now, although it is held that the *combined* JE document was used in compiling Joshua, there is no trace of this distinction of names in that book. Nor is there much trace of other distinctions found in Genesis. So that it is no great wonder that Canon Driver is uncertain whether, after all, that was the document that was used in compiling Joshua. Then, as to the grounds on which the Deuteronomist is supposed to have had a share in the book. Wherever anything is said indicating that under Joshua the Divine purposes and ordinances enjoined by God on Moses were fulfilled, that is referred to the Deuteronomist writer, as if it would have been unnatural for an ordinary historian to call attention to such a circumstance. For instance, the remark of Rahab that as soon as the Canaanites heard what God had done to Egypt, and to the two kings of the Amorites on the other side of Jordan, their hearts fainted, is referred to the Deuteronomist, as if it had rather been an idea of his than a statement of Rahab's. It is strange that Canon Driver should not have seen that this is the very hinge of Rahab's speech, because it gives us the explanation of the remarkable faith that had taken possession of her polluted heart. The truth is, we can hardly conceive that any part of the book should have been written by one who did not connect Joshua with Moses, and both of them with the patriarchs, and who was not impressed by the vital connection of the earlier with the later transactions, and likewise by the single Divine purpose running through the whole history.

But we are far from thinking that there is no foundation for any of the conclusions of the critics regarding the Book of Joshua. What seems their great weakness is the confidence with which they assign this part to one writer and that part to another, and bring down the composition of the book to a late period of the history. That various earlier documents were made use of by the author of the book seems very plain. For instance, in the account of the crossing of the Jordan, use seems to have been made of two documents, not always agreeing in minute details, and pieced together in a primitive fashion characteristic of a very early period of literary composition. The record of the delimitation of the possessions of the several tribes must have been taken from the report of the men that were sent to survey the country, but it is not a complete record. There are other traces of different documents in other parts of the book, but any diversities between them are quite insignificant, and in no degree impair its historical trustworthiness.

As to the hand of a reviser or revisers in the book, we see no difficulty in allowing for such. We can conceive an authorized reviser expanding speeches, but thoroughly in the line of the speakers, or inserting explanatory remarks as to places, or as to practices that had prevailed "unto this day." But it is atrocious to be told of revisers colouring statements and modifying facts in the interests of religious parties, or even in the interest of truth itself. Any alterations in the way of revision seem to have been very limited, otherwise we should not find in the existing text those awkward joinings of different documents which are not in perfect accord. Whoever the revisers were, they seem to have judged it best to leave these things

as they found them, rather than incur the responsibility of altering what had already been written.

It has generally been assumed by spiritual expositors that there must be something profoundly symbolical in a book that narrates the work of Joshua, or Jesus, the first, so far as we know, to bear the name that is "above every name." The subject is considered with some fulness in Pearson's "Exposition of the Creed," and various points of resemblance, not all equally valid,[1] are noted between Joshua and Jesus.

The one point of resemblance on which we seem to be warranted to lay much stress is, that Joshua gave the people REST. Again and again we read—"The land rested from war" (xi. 23), "The land had rest from war" (xiv. 15), "The Lord gave them rest round about" (xxi. 44), "The Lord your God hath given rest unto your brethren" (xxii. 4), "The Lord had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about" (xxiii. 1). That was Joshua's great achievement, as the instrument of God's purpose. Yet

[1] "The hand of Moses and Aaron brought the people out of Egypt, but left them in the wilderness, and could not seat them in Canaan. . . . Joshua, the successor, only could effect that in which Moses failed. . . . The death of Moses and the succession of Joshua pre-signified the continuance of the law till Jesus came. . . . Moses must die that Joshua might succeed. . . . If we look on Joshua as the judge and ruler of Israel, there is scarce an action which is not predictive of our Saviour. He begins his office at the banks of the Jordan where Christ is baptized, and enters upon the public exercise of his prophetical office. He chooseth there twelve men out of the people to carry twelve stones over with them; as our Jesus thence began to choose His twelve apostles. . . . It hath been observed that the saving Rahab the harlot alive foretold what Jesus once should speak to the Jews—'Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.' . . ."

in Hebrews we read that this was not the real rest—it was only a symbol of it: "If Joshua had given them rest, then would God not afterward have spoken of another day." The real rest was the rest arising from faith in Jesus Christ. Many persons look on Joshua as a somewhat dry book, full of geographical names, as unsuggestive as they are hard and unfamiliar. Yet on every one of the places so named faith may see inscribed, as in letters from heaven, the sweet word REST. Each of these places became a home for men who had been wandering for some forty years in a waste howling wilderness. At last they reached a spot where they did not fear the long familiar summons to "arise and depart." The sickly mother, the consumptive maiden, the paralysed old man might rest in peace, no longer terrified at the prospect of journeys which only increased their ailments and aggravated their sufferings.

The spiritual lesson of this book then is, that in Jesus Christ there is rest for the pilgrim. It is no slight or unevangelical lesson. It is the echo of His own glorious words, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Whosoever is weary—whether under the burden of care, or the sense of guilt, or the bitterness of disappointment, or the anguish of a broken heart, or the conviction that all is vanity—the message of this book to him is,—"There remaineth a rest to the people of God." Even now, the rest of faith; and hereafter, that rest of which the voice from heaven proclaimed—"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

CHAPTER II.

JOSHUA'S ANTECEDENTS

FOUR hundred years is a long way to go back in tracing a pedigree. Joshua's might have been traced much farther back than that—back to Noah, or for that matter to Adam; but Israelites usually counted it enough to begin with that son of Jacob who was the head of their tribe. It could be no small gratification to Joshua that he had Joseph for his ancestor, and that of the two sons of Joseph he was sprung from the one whom the dying Jacob so expressly placed before the other as the heir of the richer blessing (1 Chron. vii. 20-27). It is remarkable that the descendants of Joseph attached no consequence to the fact that on the side of Joseph's wife they were sprung from one of the highest functionaries of Egypt (Gen. xli. 45), any more than the children of Mered, of the tribe of Judah, whose wife, Bithiah, was a daughter of Pharaoh (1 Chron. iv. 18), gained rank in Israel from the royal blood of their mother. The glory of high connections with the heathen counted for nothing; it was entirely eclipsed by the glory of the chosen seed. To be of the household of God was higher than to be born of kings.

Joshua appears to have come of the principal family of the tribe, for his grandfather, Elishama (1 Chron. vii. 26), was captain and head of his tribe (Num. i. 10, ii. 18), and in the order of march through the

wilderness marched at the head of the forty thousand five hundred men that constituted the great tribe of Ephraim; while his son, Nun, and his grandson, Joshua, would of course march beside him. Not only was Elishama at the head of the tribe, but apparently also of the whole "camp of Ephraim," which, besides his own tribe, embraced Manasseh and Benjamin, being the whole descendants of Rachel (Num. ii. 24). Under their charge in all likelihood was a remarkable relic that had been brought very carefully from Egypt—the bones of Joseph (Exod. xiii. 19). Great must have been the respect paid to the coffin which contained the embalmed body of the Governor of Egypt, and which was never lost sight of during all the period of the wanderings, till at length it was solemnly deposited in its resting-place at Shechem (Josh. xxiv. 32). Young Joshua, grandson of the prince of the tribe, must have known it well. For Joshua was himself cast in the mould of Joseph, an ardent, courageous, God-fearing, patriotic youth. Very interesting to him it must have been to recall the romance of Joseph's life, his grievous wrongs and trials, his gentle spirit under them all, his patient and invincible faith, his lofty purity and self-control, his intense devotion to duty, and finally his marvellous exaltation and blessed experience as the saviour of his brethren! And that coffin must have seemed to Joshua ever to preach this sermon,—"God will surely visit you." With Joseph, young Joshua believed profoundly in his nation, because he believed profoundly in his nation's God; he felt that no other people in the world could have such a destiny, or could be so worthy of the service of his life.

This sense of Israel's relation to God raised in him an enthusiastic patriotism, and soon brought him under

the notice of Moses, who quickly discerned in the grandson a spirit more congenial to his own than that of either the father or the grandfather. Not even Moses himself had a warmer love than Joshua for Israel, or a more ardent desire to serve the people that had such a blessed destiny. In all likelihood the first impression Joshua made on Moses might have been described in the words—"It came to pass that the soul of Moses was knit with the soul of Joshua, and Moses loved him as his own soul."

In no other way can we account for the extraordinary mark of confidence with which Joshua was honoured when he was selected in the early days of the wilderness sojourn, not only to repel the attack which the Amalekites had made upon Israel, but to choose the men by whom this was to be done. Why pass over father and grandfather, if this youth, Joshua, had not already displayed qualities that fitted him for this difficult task better than either of them? We cannot but note, in passing, the proof we have of the contemporaneousness of the history, that no mention is made of the reasons why Joshua of all men was appointed to this command. If the history was written near the time, with Joshua's splendid career fresh in the minds of the people, the reasons would be notorious and did not need to be given; if it was written long afterwards, what more natural than that something should be said to explain the remarkable choice?

On whatever grounds Joshua was appointed, the result amply vindicated the selection. On Joshua's part there is none of that hesitation in accepting his work which was shown even by Moses himself when he got his commission at the burning bush. He seems to have accepted the appointment with humble faith

and spirited enthusiasm, and prepared at once for the perilous enterprise.

And he had little enough time to prepare, for a new attack of the Amalekites was to be made next day. We may conceive him, after prayer to his Lord, setting out with a few chosen comrades to invite volunteers to join his corps, rousing their enthusiasm by picturing the dastardly attack that the Amalekites had made on the sick and infirm (Deut. xxv. 17, 18), and scattering their fears by recalling the promise to Abraham, "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee." That Moses knew him to be a man of faith whose trust was in the living God was shown by his promise to stand next morning on the hill top with the rod of God in his hand. Yes, the rod of God! Had not Joshua seen it stretched out over the Red Sea, first to make a passage for Israel, and thereafter to bring back the waters on Pharaoh's host? Was he not just the man to value aright that symbol of Divine power? The troop selected by Joshua may have been small as the band of Gideon, but if it was as full of faith and courage it was abundantly able for its work!

The Amalekites are sometimes supposed to have been descendants of an Amalek who was the grandson of Esau (Gen. xxxvi. 12), but the name is much older (Gen. xiv. 7), and was applied at an early period to the inhabitants of the tract of country stretching southwards from the Dead Sea to the peninsula of Sinai. Whatever may have been their origin, they were old inhabitants of the wilderness, well acquainted probably with every mountain and valley, and well skilled in that Bedouin style of warfare which even practised troops are little able to meet. They were therefore very formidable opponents to the raw levy of

Israelites, who could be but little acquainted with weapons of war, and were wholly unaccustomed to battle.

The Amalekites could not have been ignorant of the advantage of a good position, and they probably occupied a post not easy to attack and carry. Evidently the battle was a serious one. The practised and skilful tactics of the Amalekites were more than a match for the youthful valour of Joshua and his comrades; but as often as the uplifted rod of Moses was seen on the top of the neighbouring hill, new life and courage rushed into the souls of the Israelites, and for the time the Amalekites retreated before them. Hour after hour the battle raged, till the arm of Moses became too weary to hold up the rod. A stone had to be found for him to sit on, and his comrades, Aaron and Hur, had to hold up his hands. But even then, though the advantage was on the side of Joshua, it was sunset before Amalek was thoroughly defeated. The issue of the battle was no longer doubtful—"Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword" (Exod. xvii. 13).

It was a memorable victory, due in effect to the hand of God as really as the destruction of the Egyptians had been, but due instrumentally to the faith and fortitude of Joshua and his troop, whose ardour could not be quenched by the ever-resumed onslaughts of Amalek. And when the fight was over, Joshua could not but be the hero of the camp and the nation, as really as David after the combat with Goliath. Congratulations must have poured on him from every quarter, and not only on him, but on his father and grandfather as well. To Joshua these would come with mingled feelings; gratification at having been able to do such a service for his people, and gratitude

for the presence of Him by whom alone he had prevailed. "Not unto us, Lord, not unto us, but to Thy name be the glory." It was a splendid beginning for Israel's wilderness history, if only it had been followed up by the people in a kindred spirit. But there were not many Joshuas in the camp, and the spirit did not spread.

It is remarkable what a hold that incident at Rephidim has taken on the Christian imagination. Age after age, for more than three thousand years, its influence has been felt. Nor can it ever cease to impress believing men that, so long as Moses holds out his rod, so long as active trust is placed in the power and presence of the Most High in the great battle with sin and evil, Israel must prevail; but if this trust should fail, if Moses should let down his rod, Amalek will conquer. It was well that Moses was instructed to write the transaction in a book and rehearse it before Joshua. Well also that it should be commemorated by another memorial, an altar to the Lord with the name of "Jehovah-nissi," the Lord my banner. How often has faith looked out towards that unknown mountain where Aaron and Hur held up the weary arms of Moses, and what a new thrill of courage and hope has the spectacle sent through hearts often "faint yet pursuing"! Happily on Joshua the effect was wholesome; a less spiritual man would have been puffed up by his remarkable victory; but in him its only effect, as was shown by the whole tenor of his future life, was a firmer trust in God, and a deeper determination to wait only on Him.

It was no wonder that after this Joshua was selected by Moses to be his personal comrade and attendant in connection with that most solemn of all his duties—the

receiving of the law on the top of the mount. Here again was a most distinguished honour for so young a man. Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, with seventy of the elders, were summoned to ascend to a certain height and worship afar off; while Moses, accompanied by Joshua, went up into the mount of God (Exod. xxiv. 13). What became of Joshua while Moses was in immediate fellowship with God is not very apparent. The first impression we derive from the narrative is that he was with Moses all the time, for when Moses begins his descent Joshua is at his side (Exod. xxxii. 17). Yet we cannot suppose that in that most solemn transaction of Moses with Jehovah when the law was given any third party was present. On a careful study of the narrative throughout it will probably be seen that when, after going up a certain distance in company with Aaron and his sons and the seventy elders, Moses was called to a higher part of the mount, Joshua accompanied Moses (Exod. xxiv. 13), and that he was with Moses during the six days when the glory of God abode on Mount Sinai and a cloud covered the mount (ver. 15); but that when God again, after these six days, called to Moses to ascend still higher, and Moses "went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up to the mount" (ver. 18), Joshua remained behind. His place of rest would thus be half-way between the spot where the elders saw God's glory and the summit where God talked with Moses. But the remarkable thing is, that from that place Joshua would seem never to have moved all the forty days and forty nights when Moses was with God. We can hardly conceive a case of more remarkable obedience, a more striking instance of the quiet waiting of faith. To a youth of his spirit and habits the restraint must have been somewhat

trying. We know that Aaron did not remain long on the hill, for he was at hand when the people cried for "gods to go before them" (Exod. xxxii. 1). Impatience of God's slow methods had been a snare to the fathers—to Abraham and Sarah in the matter of Hagar; to Rachel when she raised the petulant cry, "Give me children, or else I die"; to Jacob when the promises seemed broken to atoms, and "all things" seemed "against him." Joseph alone had stood the trial of patience, and now Joshua showed himself of the like spirit. The word of Moses to him was like an anchor holding the ship firmly against the force of wind and tide. What a solemn time it must have been, and what a precious lesson it must have taught him for the whole future of his life!

More than three thousand years have sped away, but have the servants of God on an average reached the measure of Joshua's patience? Prayers unanswered, promises unfulfilled, sickness protracted during weary years of pain, disappointments and trials coming in troops as if all God's waves and billows were passing over them, active persecution bringing all the devices of torture to bear upon them,—how have such things tried the patience, the waiting power of the servants of God! But let them remember that if the trial be severe the recompense is great, and that in the end nothing will grieve them more than to have distrusted their master and thought it possible that His promises would fail. "God is not unrighteous to forget." Richard Cecil tells that once, when walking with his little son, he bade him wait for him at a certain gate till he should return. He thought he would be back in a few minutes, but meanwhile an unexpected occurrence constrained him to go into the city, where,

under an engrossing piece of business, he remained all day utterly forgetful of his charge to the boy. On his return at night to his suburban home, the boy was nowhere to be found. In a moment the order to remain at the gate flashed on his father's memory. Was it possible he should still be there? He hurried back and found him—he had been told to wait till his father returned, and he had done as he had been told. The boy that could act thus must have been made of no common stuff. So are they who can say, "I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry."

At last Joshua rejoins his master, and they proceed towards the foot of the mount. As they approach the camp, a noise is heard from afar. His military instinct finds an explanation,—"There is a noise of war in the camp." No, says the more experienced Moses; it is neither the shout of victors nor of vanquished, it is the noise of singing I hear; and so it was. For when they reached the camp, the people were at the very height of the idolatrous revelling that followed the construction and worship of the golden calf, and the sounds that fell on the ears of Moses and Joshua were the bacchanalian shouts of unholy and shameful riot. What a contrast to the solemn and holy scene on the top! What a gulf lies between the holy will of God and the polluted passions of men!

During the painful scenes that ensued, Joshua continued in faithful attendance on Moses; and when Moses removed the tabernacle (the temporary structure hitherto used for sacred services) and placed it outside the camp, Joshua was with him, and departed not out of the tabernacle (Exod. xxxiii. 11). We are not told whether he ascended the mount the second time with

Moses, but it is likely that he did. At all events he was much with Moses at this early and susceptible period of his life. The young man did not recoil from the company of the old, nor did he who had been commander in the battle of Rephidim shrink from the duty of a servant. Deeper and deeper, as he kept company with Moses, must have been his impression of his wisdom, his faith, his loyalty to God, and his entire devotion to the welfare of his people; and stronger and stronger must have waxed his own desire that if ever he should be called to a similar service he might show the same spirit and fulfil the same high end!

The next time that Joshua comes into notice is not so flattering to himself. It is on that occasion when the Spirit descended on the seventy elders that had been appointed to assist Moses, and they prophesied round about the tabernacle. Two of the seventy were not with the rest, but nevertheless they got the spirit and were prophesying in the camp. The military instinct of Joshua was hurt at the irregularity, and his concern for the honour of Moses was roused by their apparent indifference to the presence of their head. He hurried to inform Moses, not doubting but he would interfere to correct the irregularity. But the narrow spirit of youth met with a memorable rebuke from the larger and more noble spirit of the leader,—"Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!"

Not long after this Joshua was appointed to another memorable service. After the law-giving had been brought to an end, and the host of Israel had removed from the mountain to the borders of the promised land, he was appointed one of the twelve spies that

were sent forward to explore the country. Formerly his name had been Oshea; it was now changed to Jehoshua or Joshua. The changing of the name was in itself significant, and still more the character of the change, by which a syllable of the Divine name was inserted in it. For, by the practice of the nation, the changing of a name denoted a man's entrance on a new chapter of his history, or his coming out before the world in a new character. So it was when Abram's name was changed to Abraham, Sarai's to Sarah, and Jacob's to Israel; so also when Simon became Cephas, and Saul Paul. But the new name given to Joshua was in itself more remarkable—Joshua, that is, Jehovah saves: in the New Testament, Jesus. No doubt it looked back on the victory of Rephidim when the Lord wrought such a deliverance in Israel through Joshua. But it indicated that the feature that had appeared at Rephidim would continue to characterise him during his life. It was a testimony from Moses, and from Him who inspired Moses, to the character of Joshua, as it had come out during all the close intercourse of Moses with him. And it invested Joshua with a dignity that ought to have raised him very highly in the eyes of the other spies, and of all the congregation of Israel. Who could be more worthy of their respect than the young man who had shown himself so faithful in all his previous history, and who had now received a name that indicated that it would be the distinction of his life, like Him whom he prefigured, to lead his people to the enjoyment of God's salvation?

The forty days spent by the twelve men in exploring the land were a great contrast to the forty days spent by Joshua on the mount. All was inactivity and patient waiting in the one case; all was activity and

bustle in the other. For there is a time to work and a time to rest. If at the one period Joshua had to put a restraint on his natural activity, at the other he could give it full swing.

Apart from its more immediate object, this early tour through Palestine must have been one of surpassing interest. To witness each spot that had been made memorable and classical by the lives of his forefathers; to sit by the well of Beersheba, and recall all that had happened there; to repose under Abraham's oak at Mamre; to bow at the cave of Machpelah; to recall the visits of angels at Bethel, and the ladder which had been seen going up to heaven,—was not only most thrilling, but to a man of Joshua's faith most inspiring; because every spot that had such associations was a witness that God had given them the land, and a proof that even though the sons of Anak were there, and their cities were walled up to heaven, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob would be faithful to His promise, and, if the people would only trust Him, would right speedily place them in full possession.

Caleb and Joshua were the only two men whose faith stood the test of this survey; the rest were thoroughly cowed by the greatness of the difficulties. And Caleb seems to have been the foremost of the two, for in some places he is named as if he stood alone. Probably he was the one who came forward and spoke; but even if Joshua's faith was not so strong at first, it was no dishonour to be indebted to the greater courage and confidence of his brother.

We can hardly doubt that in their long marches and quiet encampments the twelve men had many a discussion as to what they would advise, and that the ten felt themselves beaten both in argument and in faith

by the two. Long before they returned to the camp of Israel they had taken their sides, and by the sides they had taken they were determined to abide.

When they come back, the ten open the business and give their decided judgment against any attempt to take possession of the land. Impatient of their misrepresentations, Caleb perhaps strikes in, repudiates the notion that the people are not able to take possession, and urges them in God's name to go up at once. But it is easier far to stir up discontent and fear than to stimulate faith. The cry of the congregation, "Up, make us a captain, and let us return to Egypt," shows how strongly the tide of unbelief is flowing. Moses and Aaron are overwhelmed. The two leaders fall on their faces before the congregation. But neither the cry of the congregation nor the attitude of Moses and Aaron daunts the two faithful spies. With clothes rent they rush in, renewing their commendations of the land, laying hold of the Almighty Protector, and scorning the opposition of the inhabitants, whose hearts were cowed with terror and whose defence was departed from them. It was a fine spectacle,—the two against the million—the little remnant "faithful found among the faithless." But it was all in vain. "All the congregation bade stone them with stones." And in their impulsive and excitable temper the horrible cry would have been obeyed had not the glory of the Lord shone out and arrested the infatuated people (Num. xiv. 10).

For this shameless sin the penalty was very heavy. The congregation were to wander in the wilderness for forty years till all that generation should die off; the ten unfaithful spies were to die at once of a plague before the Lord; and not one of the generation that left Egypt was to enter the promised land. How easily can

God defeat the purposes of man! Where is now the proposal to make a captain and return to Egypt? "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!"

Joshua and Caleb are doubly honoured; their lives are preserved when the other ten die of the plague; and they alone, of all the grown men of that generation, are to be allowed to enter and obtain homes in the land of promise.

For eight-and-thirty years we hear nothing more of Joshua. Like Moses, he has an interesting youth, then a long burial in the wilderness, and then he emerges from his obscurity and does a great work, second only to that of Moses himself. The first mention of him after his long eclipse is immediately before the death of Moses. God virtually appoints him to be his successor, and directs both of them to present themselves in the tabernacle of the congregation (Deut. xxxi. 14). And Moses calls him to his office, gives him a charge and says, "Be strong and of a good courage: for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I sware unto them: and I will be with thee" (Deut. xxxi. 23).

We might earnestly desire, in entering on the study of Joshua's life, to draw aside the veil that covers the eight-and-thirty years, and see how he was further prepared for his great work. We might like to look into his heart, and see after what fashion this man was made to whom the destruction of the Canaanites was entrusted. A religious warrior is a peculiar character; a Gustavus Adolphus, an Oliver Cromwell, a Henry Havelock, a General Gordon; Joshua was of the same mould, and we should have liked to know him more

intimately; but this is denied to us. He stands out to us simply as one of the military heroes of the faith. In depth, in steadiness, in endurance, his faith was not excelled by that of Abraham or of Moses himself. The one conviction that dominated all in him was, that he was called by God to his work. If that work was often repulsive, let us not on that account withhold our admiration from the man who never conferred with flesh and blood, and who was never appalled either by danger or difficulty, for he "saw Him who is invisible."

CHAPTER III.

A SUCCESSOR TO MOSES.

JOSHUA i. 2.

THERE are some men to whom it is almost impossible to find successors. Men of imperial mould; Nature's primates, head and shoulders above other men, born to take the lead. Not only possessed of great gifts originally, but placed by Providence in situations that have wonderfully expanded their capacity and made their five talents ten. Called to be leaders of great movements, champions of commanding interests, often gifted with an imposing presence, and with a magnetic power that subdues opposition and kindles enthusiasm as if by magic. What a bereavement when such men are suddenly removed! How poor in comparison those who come next them, and from among whom successors have to be chosen! When the Hebrews mourned the death of Samson, the difference in physical strength between him and his brethren could not have appeared greater than the intellectual and moral gulf appears between a great king of men, suddenly removed, and the bereaved children that bend helpless over his grave.

A feeling of this sort must have spread itself through the host of Israel when it was known that Moses was dead. Speculation as to his successor there could be none, for not only had God designated Joshua, but before he died Moses had laid his hands upon him, and

the people had acknowledged him as their coming leader. And Joshua had already achieved a record of no common order, and had been favoured with high tokens of the Divine approval. Yet what a descent it must have seemed from Moses to Joshua! From the man who had so often been face to face with God, who had commanded the sea to make a way for the redeemed of the Lord to pass over, who had been their legislator and their judge ever since they were children, to whom they had gone in every difficulty, and who for wisdom and disinterestedness had gained the profound confidence of every one of them;—what a descent, we say, to this son of Nun, known hitherto as but the servant of Moses—an intrepid soldier, no doubt, and a man of unfaltering faith, but whose name seemed as if it could not couple with that of their imperial leader!

Well though Joshua did his work in after life, and bright though the lustre of his name ultimately became, he never attained to the rank of Moses. While the name of Moses is constantly reappearing in the prophets, in the psalms, in the gospels, in the epistles, and in the apocalypse, that of Joshua is not found out of the historical books except in the speech of Stephen and that well-known passage in the Hebrews (iv. 8), where the received version perplexes us by translating it Jesus. But it was no disparagement of him that he was so far surpassed by the man to whom, under God, the very existence of the nation was due. And in some respects, Joshua is a more useful example to us than Moses. Moses seems to stand half-way in heaven, almost beyond reach of imitation. Joshua is more on our own level. If not a man of surpassing genius, he commends himself as having made the best possible use of his talents, and done his part carefully and well.

The remark has been made that eras of great creative vigour are often succeeded by periods dull and common place. The history of letters and of the fine arts shows that bursts of artistic splendour like the Renaissance, or of literary originality like the Augustan age in Roman or the Elizabethan in English literature, are not followed by periods of equal lustre. And the same phenomenon has often been found in the Christian Church. In more senses than one the Apostles had no successors. Who in all the sub-apostolic age was worthy even to untie the latchet of Peter, or John, or Paul? The inferiority is so manifest that had there been nothing else to guide the Church in framing the canon of the New Testament, the difference between the writings of the Apostles and their companions on the one hand, and of men like Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Ignatius, and Hermes on the other, would have sufficed to settle the question. So also at the era of the Reformation. Hardly a country but had its star or its galaxy of the first magnitude. Luther and Melancthon, Calvin and Coligny, Farel and Viret, John à-Lasco and John Knox, Latimer and Cranmer,—what incomparable men they were! But in the age that followed what names can we find to couple with theirs?

Of other sections of the Church the same remark has been made, and sometimes it has been turned to an unfair use. If in the second generation, after a great outburst of power and grace, there are few or no men of equal calibre, it does not follow that the glory has departed, and that the Church is to droop her head, and wonder to what unworthy course on her part the degeneracy is to be ascribed. We are not to expect in such a case that the laws of nature will be set aside to gratify our pride. We are to recognise a state of

things which God has ordained for wise purposes, although it may not be flattering to us. We are to place ourselves in the attitude in which Joshua was called to place himself when the curt announcement of the text as to Moses was followed by an equally curt order to him—"Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise."

The question for Joshua is not whether he is a fit person to succeed Moses. His mental exercise is not to compare himself with Moses, and note the innumerable points of inferiority on every side. His attitude is not to bow down his head like a bulrush, mourning over the departed glory of Israel, grieving for the mighty dead, on whose like neither he nor his people will ever look again. If there ever was a time when it might seem excusable for a bereaved nation and a bereaved servant to abandon themselves to a sense of helplessness, it was on the death of Moses. But even at that supreme moment the command to Joshua is, "Now therefore arise." Gird yourself for the new duties and responsibilities that have come upon you. Do not worry yourself with asking whether you are capable of doing these duties, or with vainly looking within yourself for the gifts and qualities which marked your predecessor. It is enough for you that God in His providence calls you to take the place of the departed. If He has called you, He will equip you. It is not His way to send men a warfare on their own charges. The work to which He calls you is not yours but His. Remember He is far more interested in its success than you can be. Think not of yourself, but of Him, and go forth under the motto, "We will rejoice in Thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners.'

In many different situations of life we may hear the same exhortation that was now addressed to Joshua. A wise, considerate, and honoured father is removed, and the eldest son, a mere stripling, is called to take his place, perhaps in the mercantile office or place of business, certainly in the domestic circle. He is called to be the comforter and adviser of his widowed mother, and the example and helper of his brothers and sisters. Well for him when he hears a voice from heaven, "Your father is dead; now therefore arise!" Rouse yourself for the duties that now devolve upon you; onerous they may be and beyond your strength, but not on that account to be evaded or repudiated; rather to be looked on as spurs provided and designed by God, that you may apply yourself with heart and soul to your duties, in the belief that faithful and patient application shall not be without its reward!

Or it may be that the summons comes to some young minister as successor to a father in Israel, whose ripe gifts and fragrant character have won the confidence and the admiration of all. Or to some teacher in a Sunday-school, where the man of weight, of wise counsel, and holy influence has been suddenly snatched away. But be the occasion what it may, the removal of any man of ripe character and gifts always comes to the survivor with the Divine summons, "Now therefore arise!" That is the one way in which you must try to improve this dispensation; the world is poorer for the loss of his gifts—learn you to make the most of yours!

It was no mean impression of Moses that God meant to convey by the designation, "Moses My servant." It was not a high-sounding title, certainly. A great contrast to the long list of honourable titles sometimes

engraved on men's coffins or on their tombs, or proclaimed by royal herald or king-at-arms over departed kings or nobles. One of the greatest of men has no handle to his name—he is simply Moses. He has no titles of rank or office—he is simply "My servant." But true greatness is "when unadorned adorned the most." Moses is a real man, a man of real greatness; there is no occasion therefore to deck him out in tinsel and gilt; he is gold to the core.

But think what is really implied in this designation, "My servant." Even if Moses had not been God's servant in a sense and in a degree in which few other men ever were, it would have been a glorious thing to obtain that simple appellation. True indeed, the term "servant of God" is such a hackneyed one, and often so little represents what it really means, that we need to pause and think of its full import. There may be much honour in being a servant. Even in our families and factories a model servant is a rare and precious treasure. For a real servant is one that has the interest of his master as thoroughly at heart as his own, and never scruples, at any sacrifice of personal interest or feeling, to do all that he can for his master's welfare. A true servant is one of whom his master may say, "There is absolutely no need for me to remind him what my interest requires; he is always thinking of my interest, always on the alert to attend to it, and there is not a single thing I possess that is not safe in his hands."

Does God possess many such servants? Who among us can suppose God saying this of him? Yet this was the character of Moses, and in God's eyes it invested him with singular honour. It was his distinction that he was "faithful in all his house." His own will was

thoroughly subdued to the will of God. The people of whom God gave him charge were dear to him as a right hand or a right eye. All personal interests and ambitions were put far from him. To aggrandise himself or to aggrandise his house never entered into his thoughts. Never was self more thoroughly crucified in any man's breast. Beautiful and delightful in God's eyes must have seemed this quality in Moses,—his absolute disinterestedness, his sensibility to every hint of his Master's will, his consecration of all he was and had to God, and to his people for God's sake!

It was thus no unsuggestive word that God used of Moses, when he told Joshua that "His servant" was dead. It was a significant indication of what God had valued in Moses and now expected of Joshua. The one thing for Joshua to remember about Moses is, that he was the servant of God. Let him take pains to be the same; let him have his ear as open as that of Moses to every intimation of God's will, his will as prompt to respond, and his hand as quick to obey.

Was not this view of the glory of Moses as God's servant a foreshadow of what was afterwards taught more fully and on a wider scale by our Lord? "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." Jesus sought to reverse the natural notions of men as to what constitutes greatness, when He taught that, instead of being measured by the number of servants who wait on us, it is measured rather by the number of persons to whom we become servants. And if it was a mark of Christ's own humiliation that "He took on Him the form of a servant," did not this redound to His highest glory? Was it not for this that God highly exalted Him and gave Him a name that is above

every name? Happy they who are content to be GOD'S SERVANTS in whatsoever sphere of life He may place them; seeking not their own, but always intent upon their Master's business!

And now Joshua must succeed Moses and be God's servant as he was. He must aim at this as the one distinction of his life; he must seek in every action to know what God would have him to do. Happy man if he can carry out this ideal of life! No conflicting interests or passions will distract his soul. His eye being single, his whole body will be full of light. The power that nerves his arm will not be more remarkable than the peace that dwells in his soul. He will show to all future generations the power of a "lost will,"—not the suppression of all desire, according to the Buddhist's idea of bliss, but all lawful natural desires in happy and harmonious action, because subject to the wise, holy, and loving guidance of the will of God.

Thus we see among the other paradoxes of His government, how God uses death to promote life. The death of the eminent, the aged, the men of brilliant gifts makes way for others, and stimulates their activity and growth. When the champion of the forest falls the younger trees around it are brought more into contact with the sunshine and fresh air, and push up into taller and more fully developed forms. If none of the younger growth attains the size of the champion, a great many may be advanced to a higher average of size and beauty. If in the second generation of any great religious movement few or none can match the "mighties" of the previous age, there may be a general elevation, a rise of level, an increase of efficiency among the rank and file.

In many ways death enters into God's plans. Not

only does it make way for the younger men,[1] but it has a solemnizing and quickening effect on all who are not hardened and dulled by the wear and tear of life.

What a memorable event in the spiritual history of families is the first sudden affliction, the first breach in the circle of loving hearts! First, the new experience of intense tender longing, baffled by the inexorable conditions of death; then the vivid vision of eternity, the reality of the unseen flashing on them with living and awful power, and giving an immeasurable importance to the question of salvation; then the drawing closer to one another, the forswearing of all animosities and jealousies, the cordial desire for unbroken peace and constant co-operation; and if it be the father or the mother that has been taken, the ambition to be useful,—to be a help not a burden to the surviving parent, and to do what little they can of what used to be their father's or their mother's work. Death becomes actually a quickener of the vital energies; instead of a withering influence, it drops like the gentle dew, and becomes the minister of life.

And death is not alone among the destructive agencies that are so often directed to life-giving ends. What a remarkable place is that which is occupied by Pain

[1] "Can death itself when seen in the light of this truth [the adjustment of every being in animated nature to every other] be denied to be an evidence of benevolence? I think not. The law of animal generation makes necessary the law of animal death, if the largest amount of animal happiness is to be secured. If there had been less death there must also have been less life, and what life there was must have been poorer and meaner. Death is a condition of the prolificness of nature, the multiplicity of species, the succession of generations, the co-existence of the young and the old; and these things, it cannot reasonably be doubted, add immensely to the sum of animal happiness."—FLINT'S "Theism," p. 251.

among God's instruments of good! How many are there who, looking back on their lives, have to confess, with a mixture of sadness and of joy, that it is their times of greatest suffering that have been the most decisive in their lives,—marked by their best resolutions,—followed by their greatest advance! And it sometimes would seem as if the acuter the suffering the greater the blessing. How near God seems at times to come to the height of cruelty when really He is overflowing with love! He seems to select the very tenderest spots on which to inflict His blows, the very tenderest and purest affections of the heart. It is a wonderful triumph of faith and submission when the sufferer stands firm and tranquil amidst it all. And still more when he can find consolation in the analogy which was supplied by God's own act,—"He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

And this brings us to our last application. Our Lord Himself, by a beautiful analogy in nature, showed the connection, in the very highest sense, between death and life—"Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it beareth much fruit." "Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin." When Jesus died at Calvary, the head-quarters of death became the nursery of life. The place of a skull, like the prophet's valley of dry bones, gave birth to an exceeding great army of living men. Among the wonders that will bring glory to God in the highest throughout eternity, the greatest will be this evolution of good from evil, of happiness from pain, of life from death. And even when the end comes, and death is swallowed up of victory, and death and hell

are cast into the lake of fire, there will abide with the glorified a lively sense of the infinite blessing that came to them from God through the repulsive channel of death, finding its highest expression in that anthem of the redeemed—"THOU WAST SLAIN, AND HAST REDEEMED US TO GOD BY THY BLOOD."

CHAPTER IV.

JOSHUA'S CALL.

JOSHUA i. 2—5.

JOSHUA has heard the Divine voice summoning him to the attitude of activity—"Arise!" Directions follow immediately as to the course which his activity is to take. His first step is to be a very pronounced one—"Go over this Jordan": enter the land, not by yourself, or with a handful of comrades, as you did forty years ago, but "thou and all this people." Take the bold step, cross the river; and when you are across the river, take possession of the country which I now give to your people. The time has come for decided action; it is for you to show the way, and summon your people to follow.

It was a very solemn and striking moment, second only in interest to that when, forty years before, their fathers had stood at the edge of the sea, with the host of Pharaoh hurrying on behind. At length the hour has come to take possession of the inheritance! At length the promise made so many hundred years ago to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is ripe for fulfilment! You, children of Israel, have seen that God is in no haste to fulfil His promises, and your hearts may have known much of the sickness of hope deferred. But now you are to see that after all God is faithful. He never forgets. He makes no mistakes. His delays are all designed for

good, either to chasten or to try, and thus confirm and bless His people. He will now bring forth your righteousness as the light and your judgment as the noon-day.

There were two things that might make Joshua and the people hesitate to cross the Jordan. In the first place, the river was in flood; it was the time when the Jordan overflowed its banks (Josh. iii. 15), and, being a rapid river, crossing it in such circumstances might well seem out of the question. But in the second place, to cross the Jordan was to throw down the gauntlet to the enemy. It was a declaration of war, and a challenge to them to do their worst. It was a signal for them to assemble, fight for their hearths and homes, and strain every nerve to annihilate this invader who made such a bold claim to their possessions. All the children of Anak whom Joshua had seen on his former visit would now range themselves against Israel; all the seven nations would muster their bravest forces, and the contest would not be like Joshua's battle with Amalek, finished in a single day, but a long succession of battles, in which all the resources of power and skill, of craft and cunning would be brought to bear against Israel. According to appearances, nothing short of this would be the result of compliance with the command, "Go over this Jordan."

On the one hand, therefore, compliance was physically impossible, and on the other, even if possible, it would have been fearfully perilous. But it is never God's method to give impossible commands. The very fact of His commanding anything is a proof of His readiness to make it possible, nay, to make it easy and simple to those who have faith to attempt it. "Stretch out thy hand," said Christ to the man with the withered hand.

"Stretch out my hand?" the man might have said in astonishment,—"why, it is the very thing I am unable to do." "Rise up and walk," said Peter to the lame man at the Beautiful gate. "How can I do that?" he might have replied; "don't you see that I have no use of my limbs?" But in these cases the helpless men had faith in those who bade them exert themselves; they believed that if they tried they would be helped, and helped accordingly they were. So too in the present case. Joshua knew that he and the host could not have crossed the Jordan as it then was by any contrivance in his power; but he knew that it was God's command, and he was sure that He would provide the means. He felt as if God and the people were in partnership, each equally interested in the result, and equally desirous to bring it about. Whatever it was necessary for God to do he was assured would be done, provided he and the people entered into the Divine plan, and threw all their energies into the work. Not a word of remonstrance did Joshua offer, not a word of explanation of the Divine plan did he ask; he acted as a servant should;

> "His not to make reply,
> His not to reason why;"

his only to trust and obey.

This faith in Divine power qualifying feeble mortals for the hardest tasks has originated some of the noblest enterprises in the history of the world. It was a Divine voice Columbus seemed to hear bidding him cross the wild Atlantic, for he desired to bring the natives of the distant shores beyond it into the pale of the Church; and it was his faith that sustained him when his crew became mutinous and his life was not safe for an hour. It was a Divine voice Livingstone seemed to hear

bidding him cross Africa, strike up into the heart of the continent, examine its structure, and throw it open from shore to shore; and never was there a faith stronger or steadier than that which bore him on through fever and famine, through pain and sickness, through disappointment and anguish, and, even when the cold hand of death was on him, would not let him rest until his work was done.

Often in the spiritual warfare it is useful to apply this principle. Are we called to believe? Are we called to make ourselves a new heart and a new spirit? Are we summoned to fight, to wrestle, to overcome? Certainly we are. But is not this to tantalize us by ordering us to do what we cannot do? Is not this like telling a sick man to get well, or a decrepit old creature to skip and frisk like a child? It would be so if the principle of partnership between God and us did not come into play. Faith says, God is my partner in this matter. Partners even in an ordinary business put their resources together, each doing what his special abilities fit him for. In the partnership which faith establishes between God and you, the resources of the infinite Partner become available for the needs of the finite. It is God's part to give orders, it is your part to execute them, and it is God's part to strengthen you so to do. It is this that makes the command reasonable, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Faith rejoices in the partnership, and goes forward in the confidence that the strength of the Almighty will help its weakness, not by one sudden leap, but by that steady growth in grace that makes the path of the just like the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

It was a great thing for God to announce that He was now in the act of turning His old, old promise into reality,—that the land pledged to Abraham centuries ago was now at length to become the possession of his descendants. But the gift could be of no avail unless it was actually appropriated. God gave the people the right to the land; but their own energy, made effectual through His grace, could alone secure the possession. In a remarkable way they were made to feel that, while the land was God's gift, the appropriation and enjoyment of the gift must come through their own exertions. Just as in a higher sphere we know that our salvation is wholly the gift of God; and yet the getting hold of this gift, the getting linked to Christ, the entrance as it were into the marriage covenant with Him involves the active exertion of our own will and energy, and the gift never can be ours if we fail thus to appropriate it.

As soon as God mentions the land, He expatiates on its amplitude and its boundaries. It was designed to be both a comfortable and an ample possession. In point of extent it was a spacious region,—"from the wilderness and this Lebanon, even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea, towards the going down of the sun." And it was not merely bits or corners of this land that were to be theirs, they were not designed to share it with other occupants, but "every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, to you have I given it, as I spake unto Moses." It was in no meagre or stingy spirit that God was now to fulfil His ancient promise, but in a way corresponding to the essential bountifulness of His nature. For it is a delightful truth that God's heart is large and liberal, and that

He delights in large and bountiful gifts. Has He not made this plain to all in the arrangements of nature? What more lavish than the gift of light, ever streaming from the sun in silver showers? What more abundant than the fresh air that, like an inexhaustible ocean, encompasses our globe, or the rivers that carry their fresh and fertilizing treasures unweariedly through every meadow? What more productive than the vegetable soil that under favourable conditions teems with fruits and flowers and the elements of food for the use and enjoyment of man?

And when we turn to God's provision in grace we find glorious proofs of the same abundance and generosity. We see this symbolized by the activity and generosity of our Lord, as He went about "preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people." We understand the spiritual reality of which this was the symbol, when we call to mind the Divine generosity that receives the vilest sinners; the efficacy of the blood that cleanses from all sin; the power of the Spirit that sanctifies soul, body, and spirit; the wisdom of the providence that makes all things work together for good; the glory of the love that makes us now "sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." And once more it appears in the glory and amplitude of the inheritance, of which the land of Canaan was but the type, prepared of God's infinite bounty for all who are His children by faith. Our Father's house is both large and well furnished; it is a house of many mansions; and the inheritance which He has promised is incorruptible and undefiled and fadeth not away.

It is a grand truth, of which we never can make too much, this bountifulness of God, and the delight which He has in being bountiful. It is emphatically a truth for faith to apprehend and enjoy, because appearances are so often against it. Appearances were fearfully against it while the Israelites were groaning in their Egyptian bondage, and hardly less so, despite the manna and the water from the rock, during the forty years' wandering in the desert. But that was a period of correction and of training, and in such circumstances lavish bounty was out of the question.

The most bountiful man on earth could not pour out all the liberality of his heart on the inmates of a hospital for the sick; he may give all that sick men need, but he must wait till they are well before he can give full scope to his generosity. While we are in the body we are like patients in a hospital, and the kindest feelings from God toward us must often take the form of bitter medicines, painful operations, close restraint, stinted diet, and it may be silence and darkness. But wait till we are well, and then we shall see what God hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him! Wait till we go over Jordan and take possession of the land! Two things will be seen in the clearest light—the supreme bountifulness of God, and the sinfulness of that impatient and suspicious spirit to which we are so prone. What a humiliation, if humiliation be possible in heaven, to discover that all the time when we were fretting and grumbling, God was working out His plans of supreme beneficence and love, waiting only till we should come of age to make us heirs of the universe!

It is natural to ask why, if the boundaries of the promised land were so extensive, if they reached so far

on the north-east as the Euphrates, and if they extended from Lebanon on the north to the confines of Egypt on the south, there should have been any difficulty about the two and a half tribes occupying the land east of the Jordan, where only by a special permission they obtained their settlement. For it is plain from the narrative that it was contrary to God's first intention, so to speak, that they should settle there, and that the land west of the Jordan was that to which the promise was held specially to apply. It will hardly do to say, as some have said, that the extension of the land to the Euphrates was a figure of speech, a poetical fringe or ornament as it were, intended to show that places adjacent to the land of Israel would share in some degree the radiance of its light and the influence of the Divine presence among its people. For the promise of God was really of the nature of a charter, and figures of poetry are not suitable in charters. It is rather to be understood that, in the *final* purpose of God, the possession included the whole of the ample domain contained within the specified boundaries, but that at first it would be confined within a narrower space. If the people should prove faithful to the covenant, the wider dominion would one day be conferred on them; but they were to start and get consolidated in a narrower territory. And the narrower space was that which had already been consecrated by the residence of the fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The country west of Jordan was the land of *their* pilgrimage; and even when Lot and Abraham had to separate, it was not proposed that either should cross the river. The little strip lying between the Jordan and the sea was judged most suitable for the preparatory stage of Israel's history; but had the nation served God with

fidelity, their country would have been extended—as in the days of David and Solomon it really was—to the dimensions of an empire. The rule afterwards announced was to be virtually brought into operation—"To him that hath shall be given." Hence the view taken of the settlement of the two and a half tribes east of the Jordan. It was not illegitimate; it was not inconsistent with the covenant made with the fathers; but it was for the time inexpedient, seeing that it exposed them to risks, both material and spiritual, which it would have been better for them to avoid.

One geographical expression, in the delimitation of the country, demands a brief explanation. While the country is defined as embracing the whole territory from Lebanon to the Euphrates, it is also defined as consisting in that direction of "all the land of the Hittites." But were not the Hittites one of the seven nations whose land was promised to Abraham and the fathers, and not even the first in the enumeration of these? Why should this great north-eastern section of the promised domain be designated "the land of the Hittites"?

The time was when it was a charge against the accuracy of the Scripture record that it ascribed to the Hittites this extensive dominion. That time has passed away, inasmuch as, within quite recent years, the discovery has been made that in those distant times a great Hittite empire did exist in the very region specified, between Lebanon and the Euphrates. The discovery is based on twofold data: references in the Egyptian and other monuments to a powerful people, called the Khita (Hittites), with whom even the great kings of Egypt had long and bloody wars; and inscriptions in the Hittite language found in Hamah,

Aleppo, and other places in Syria. There is still much obscurity resting on the history of this people. That the Hittites proper prevailed so extensively has been doubted by some; a Hittite confederacy has been supposed, and sometimes a Hittite aristocracy exercising control over a great empire. The only point which it is necessary to dwell on here is, that in representing the tract between Lebanon and Euphrates as equivalent to "all the land of the Hittites," the author of the Book of Joshua made a statement which has been abundantly verified by recent research.[1]

To encourage and animate Joshua to undertake the work and position of Moses it is very graciously promised—"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so will I be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." The invariable success promised was a greater boon than the greatest conquerors had been able to secure. Uniform success is a thing hardly known to captains of great expeditions, even though in the end they may prevail. But the promise to Joshua is, that all his enemies shall flee before him. None of his battles shall be even neutral, his opponents must always give way.[2] No son of Anak shall be able to oppose his onward march; no giant, like Og King of Bashan, shall terrify either him or his troops. He will "onward still to victory go,"—the Lord of hosts ever with him, the God of Jacob ever his defence.

[1] See "The Empire of the Hittites." By William Wright, D.D., F.R.G.S. London, 1886.

[2] The promise is not inconsistent with the fact that Joshua's troops were defeated by the men of Ai. In such promises there is an implied condition of steadfast regard to God's will on the part of those who receive them, and this condition was violated at Ai, not by Joshua, indeed, but by one of his people.

And this was no vague, indefinite assurance. It was sharply defined by a well-known example in the immediate past—"As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee." In what a remarkable variety of dangers and trials God was with Moses! Now he had to confront the grandest monarch on earth, supported by the strongest armies, and upheld by what claimed to be the mightest gods. Again he had to deal with an apostate people, mad upon idols, and afterwards with an excited mob, ready to stone him. Anon he had to overcome the forces of nature and bend them to his purposes; to call water from the rock, to sweeten the bitter fountain, to heal the fiery bite, to cure his sister's leprous body, to bring down bread from heaven, and people the air with flocks of birds. Moreover, he had to be the messenger of the covenant between God and Israel, to unfold God's law in its length and breadth and in all its variety of application, and to obtain from the people a hearty compliance—"All that the Lord hath said unto us, that will we do." What a marvellous work Moses did! What a testimony his life presented to the reality of the Divine presence and guidance, and what a solid and indefeasible ground of trust God gave to Joshua when He said, "As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee."

And this is crowned with the further assurance, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee,"—an assurance which is extended in the Epistle to the Hebrews to all who believe. We are so apt to view these promises as just beautiful expressions that we need to pause and think what they really mean. A promise of Divine presence, Divine protection and guidance and blessing all the days of our life, is surely a treasure of inexpressible value. It is no slight matter to realize that

this is in God's heart—that He has a constant, unvarying feeling of love toward us, and readiness to help; but we must believe this in order to get the benefit of it; and, moreover, He must be left to determine the time, the manner, and the form in which His help is to come. Alas for the unbelief, the suspicion, the fear that is so prone to eat out the spirit of trust, and in our trials and difficulties make us tremble as if we were alone! What a profound peace, what calm enjoyment and blessed hope fall to the lot of those who can believe in a God ever near, and in His unfailing faithfulness and love! Was it not the secret alike of David's calmness, of our Lord's serenity, and of the cheerful composure of many a martyr and many a common man and woman who have gone through life undisturbed and happy, that they could say—"I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved"? God grant us all that, like Abraham, we may "stagger not at the promise of God through unbelief, but that being strong in faith we may give glory to God, and believe that what He hath promised He is able also to perform."

CHAPTER V.

JOSHUA'S ENCOURAGEMENT.

JOSHUA i. 6—9.

GOD has promised to be with Joshua, but Joshua must strive to act like one in partnership with God. And that He may do so, God has just two things to press on him: in the first place, to be strong and of a good courage; and in the second place, to make the book of the law his continual study and guide. In this way he shall be able to achieve the specific purpose to which he is called, to divide the land for an inheritance to the people, as God hath sworn to their fathers; and likewise, more generally, to fulfil the conditions of a successful life—"then shalt thou make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

First, Joshua must be strong and very courageous. But are strength and courage really within our own power? Is strength not absolutely a Divine gift, and as dependent on God in its ordinary degrees as it was in the case of Samson in its highest degree? No doubt in a sense it is so; and yet the amount even of our bodily strength is not wholly beyond our own control. As bodily strength is undoubtedly weakened by careless living, by excess of eating and drinking, by all irregular

habits, by the breathing of foul air, by indolence and self-indulgence of every kind, so undoubtedly it is increased and promoted by attention to the simple laws of health, by activity and exercise, by sleep and sabbatic rest, by the moderate use of wholesome food, as well as by abstinence from hurtful drinks and drugs. And surely the duty of being strong, in so far as such things can give strength, is of far more importance than many think; for if we can thus maintain and increase our strength we shall be able to serve both God and man much better and longer than we could otherwise have done. On the other hand, the feebleness and fitfulness and querulousness often due to preventible illness must increase the trouble which we give to others, and lessen the beneficent activity and the brightening influence of our own lives.

But in Joshua's case is was no doubt strength and courage of soul that was mainly meant. Even that is not wholly independent of the ordinary conditions of the body. On the other hand, there are no doubt memorable cases where the elasticity and power of the spirit have been in the very inverse ratio to the strength of the body. By cheerful views of life and duty, natural depression has been counteracted, and the soul filled with hope and joy. "The joy of the Lord," said Nehemiah, "is the strength of His people." Fellowship with God, as our reconciled God and Father in Christ, is a source of perpetual strength. Who does not know the strengthening and animating influence of the presence even of a friend, when we find his fresh and joyous temperament playing on us in some season of depression? The radiance of his face, the cheeriness of his voice, the elasticity of his movements seem to infuse new hope and courage into the jaded soul.

When he is gone, we try to shake off the despondent feeling that has seized us, and gird ourselves anew for the battle of life. And if such an effect can be produced by fellowship with a fellow-creature, how much more by fellowship with the infinite God!—especially when it is His work we are trying to do, and when we have all His promises of help to rest on. "God is near thee, therefore cheer thee" is a perpetual solace and stimulus to the Christian soul.

But even men who are full of Christian courage need props and bulwarks in the hour of trial. Ezra and Nehemiah were bold, but they had ways of stimulating their courage, which they sometimes needed to fall back on, and they could find allies in unlikely quarters. Ezra could draw courage even from his shame, and Nehemiah from his very pride. "I was ashamed," said Ezra, "to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way;" therefore he determined to face the danger with no help but the unseen help of God. And when Nehemiah's life was in danger from the cunning devices of the enemy, and his friends advised him to hide himself, he repelled the advice with high-minded scorn—"Should such a man as I flee?"

But there is no source of courage like that which flows from the consciousness of serving God, and the consequent assurance that He will sustain and help His servants. Brief ejaculatory prayers, constantly dropping from their lips, often bring the courage which is needed. "Now, therefore, O God, strengthen my hands," was Nehemiah's habitual exclamation when faintness of heart came over him. No doubt it was Joshua's too, as it has always been of the best of God's servants. Again and again, amid the murderous threats of canni-

bals in the New Hebrides, the missionary Paton must have sunk into despair but for his firm belief in the protection of God.

The other counsel to Joshua was to follow in all things the instructions of Moses, and for this end, not to let "the book of the law depart out of his mouth, but to meditate on it day and night, that he might observe to do all that was written therein."

For Joshua was called to be the executor of Moses, as it were, not to start on an independent career of his own; and that particular call he most humbly and cheerfully accepted. Instead of breaking with the past, he was delighted to build on it as his foundation, and carry it out to its predestined issues. It was no part of his work to improve on what Moses had done; he was simply to accept it and carry it out. He had his brief, he had his instructions, and these it was his one business to fulfil. No puritan ever accepted God's revelation with more profound and unquestioning reverence than Joshua accepted the law of Moses. No Oliver Cromwell or General Gordon ever recognised more absolutely his duty to carry out the plan of another, and, undisturbed himself, leave the issue in His hands. He was to be a very incarnation of Moses, and was so to meditate on his law day and night that his mind should be saturated with its contents.

This, indeed, was a necessity for Joshua, because he required to have a clear perception of the great purpose of God regarding Israel. Why had God taken the unusual course of entering into covenant with a single family out of the mass of mankind? A purpose deliberately formed and clung to for more than four hundred years must be a grand object in the Divine mind. It was Joshua's part to keep the people in

mind of the solemnity and grandeur of their mission and to call them to a corresponding mode of life. What can more effectually give dignity and self-respect to men than to find that they have a part in the grand purposes of God? To find that God is not asleep; that He has neither given up the world to chance nor bound it with a chain of irreversible law, but that He calls us to be fellow-workers with Him in a great plan which shall in the end tend gloriously to advance the highest welfare of man?

This habit of meditation on the law which Joshua was instructed to practise was of great value to one who was to lead a busy life. No mere cursory perusal of a book of law can secure the ends for which it is given. The memory is treacherous, the heart is careless, and the power of worldly objects to withdraw attention is proverbial. We must be continually in contact with the Book of God. The practice enjoined on Joshua has kept its ground among a limited class during all the intervening generations. In every age of the Church it has been impressed on all devout and earnest hearts that there can be no spiritual prosperity and progress without daily meditation on the Word of God. It would be hard to believe in the genuine Christianity of any one who did not make a practice morning and evening of bringing his soul into contact with some portion of that Word. And wherever an eminent degree of piety has been reached, we shall find that an eminently close study of the Word has been practised. Where the habit is perfunctory, the tendency is to omit the meditation and to be content with the reading. Even in pious families there is a risk that the reading of the Scriptures morning and evening may push the duty of meditation aside, though even then

we are not to despise the benefit that arises from the familiarity gained with their contents.

But, on the other hand, the instances are numberless of men attaining to great intimacy with the Divine will and to a large conformity to it, through meditation on the Scriptures. To many the daily portion comes fresh as the manna gathered each morning at the door of Israel's camp. Think of men like George Müller of Bristol reading the Bible from beginning to end as many as a hundred times, and finding it more fresh and interesting at each successive perusal. Think of Livingstone reading it right on four times when detained at Manyuema, and Stanley three times during his Emin expedition. What resources must be in it, what hidden freshness, what power to feed and revive the soul! The sad thing is that the practice is so rare. Listen to the prophet-like rebuke of Edward Irving to the generation of his time: "Who feels the sublime dignity there is in a fresh saying descended from the porch of heaven? Who feels the awful weight there is in the least iota that hath dropped from the lips of God? Who feels the thrilling fear or trembling hope there is in words whereon the eternal destinies of himself do hang? Who feels the swelling tide of gratitude within his breast for redemption and salvation, instead of flat despair and everlasting retribution? . . . This book, the offspring of the Divine mind and the perfection of heavenly wisdom is permitted to lie from day to day, perhaps from week to week, unheeded and unperused; never welcome to our happy, healthy, and energetic moods; admitted, if admitted at all, in seasons of weakness, feeblemindedness, and disabling sorrow. . . . Oh, if books had but tongues to speak their wrongs, then might this book exclaim, Hear, O

heavens, and give ear, O earth! I came from the love and embrace of God, and mute nature, to whom I brought no boon, did me rightful homage. . . . I set open to you the gates of salvation and the way of eternal life, heretofore unknown. . . . But ye requited me with no welcome, ye held no festivity on my arrival; ye sequester me from happiness and heroism, closeting me with sickness and infirmity; ye make not of me, nor use me as your guide to wisdom and prudence, but press me into your list of duties, and withdraw me to a mere corner of your time, and most of you set me at nought and utterly disregard me. . . . If you had entertained me, I should have possessed you of the peace which I had with God when I was with Him and was daily His delight rejoicing always before Him. . . . Because I have called and ye refused . . . I also will laugh at your calamity and mock when your fear cometh."[1]

It is no excuse for neglecting this habitual reading of the Book of God that He places us now more under the action of principles than the discipline of details. For the glory of principles is that they have a bearing on every detail of our life. "Whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by Him." What could be more comprehensive than this principle of action—a principle that extends to "whatsoever we do"? There is not a moment of our waking life, not an action great or small we ever perform where the influence of this wide precept ought not to be felt. And how can it become thus pervasive unless we make it a subject of continual meditation?

[1] "For the Oracles of God: four Orations." Pp. 3—6.

In the case of Joshua, all the strenuous exhortations to him to be strong and of a good courage, and to meditate on the Divine law as given by Moses by day and by night, were designed to qualify him for his great work—"to divide the land for an inheritance to the people as God had sworn to their fathers." First of all, the land had to be conquered; and there is no difficulty in seeing how necessary it was for one who had this task on hand to be strong and of a good courage, and to meditate on God's law. Then the land had to be divided, and the people settled in their new life, and Joshua had to initiate them, as it were, in that life; he had to bind on their consciences the conditions on which the land was to be enjoyed, and start them in the performance of the duties, moral, social and religious, which the Divine constitution required. Here lay the most difficult part of his task. To conquer the country required but the talent of a military commander; to divide the country was pretty much an affair of trigonometry; but to settle them in a higher sense, to create a moral affinity between them and their God, to turn their hearts to the covenant of their fathers, to wean them from their old idolatries and establish them in such habits of obedience and trust that the doing of God's will would become to them a second nature,—here was the difficulty for Joshua. They had not only to be planted physically in groups over the country, but they had to be married to it morally, otherwise they had no security of tenure, but were liable to summary eviction. It was no land of rest for idolaters; all depended on the character they attained; loyalty to God was the one condition of a happy settlement; let them begin to trifle with the claims of Jehovah, punishment and suffering, to be

followed finally by dispersion and captivity, was the inevitable result.

It was thus that Joshua had to justify his name,—to show that he was worthy to be called by the name of Jesus. The work of Jesus may be said to have been symbolized both by that of Moses and that of Joshua. Moses symbolized the Redeemer in rescuing the people from Egypt and their miserable bondage there; as "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law." Joshua symbolized Him as He renews our hearts and makes us "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." For there are conditions moral and spiritual essential to our dwelling in the heavenly Canaan. "Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? and who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul to vanity, nor sworn deceitfully." The atmosphere of heaven is too pure to be breathed by the unregenerate and unsanctified. There must be an adaptation between the character of the inhabitant and the place of his habitation. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Thus we see the connection between Joshua's devotion to the book of the law, and success in the great work of his life—"then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." No doubt he would have the appearance of success if he simply cleared out the inhabitants who were so degraded by sin that God was compelled to sweep them off, and settled His people in their room. But that, after all, was but a small matter unless accompanied by something more. It would not secure the people from at last sharing the fate of the old inhabit-

ants; so far at least that though they should not be exterminated, yet they would be scattered over the face of the globe. How could Joshua get rid of these ominous words in the song of Moses to which they had so lately listened?—"They provoked Him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they Him to anger. They sacrified to devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not. . . . And He said, I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith." But even if in the end of the day it should come to this, nevertheless Joshua might so move and impress the people for the time being, that in the immediate future all would be well, and the dreaded consummation would be put off to a distant day.

And so at all times, in dealing with human beings, we can obtain no adequate and satisfying success unless their hearts are turned to God. Your children may be great scholars, or successful merchants, or distinguished authors, or brilliant artists, or even statesmen; what does it come to if they are dead to God, and have no living fellowship with Jesus Christ? Your congregation may be large and influential, and wealthy, and liberal; what if they are worldly, proud, and contentious? We must aim at far deeper effects, effects not to be found without the Spirit of God. The more we labour in this spirit, the more shall our way be made prosperous, the better shall be our success. "For them that honour Me I will honour; but they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed."

CHAPTER VI.

JOSHUA'S CHARGE TO THE PEOPLE.

JOSHUA i. 10—18.

GOD has spoken to Joshua; it is now Joshua's part to speak to the people. The crossing of the Jordan must be set about at once, and in earnest, and all the risks and responsibilities involved in that step firmly and fearlessly encountered.

And in the steps taken by Joshua for this purpose we see, what we so often see, how the natural must be exhausted before the supernatural is brought in. Thus, in communicating with the people through the *shoterim*, or officers, the first order which he gives is to "command the people to prepare them victuals." "Victuals" denotes the natural products of the country, and is evidently used in opposition to "manna." In another passage we read that "the manna ceased on the very morning after they had eaten of the old corn of the land" (chap. v. 12). This may have been a considerable time before, for the conquest of Sihon and Og would give the people possession of ample stores of food out of the old corn of the land. The manna was a provision for the desert only, where few or no natural supplies of food could be found. But the very day when natural stores become available, the manna

is discontinued. One cannot but contrast the carefully limited use of the supernatural in Scripture with its arbitrary and unstinted employment in mythical or fictional writings. Often in such cases it is brought in with a wanton profusion, simply to excite wonder, sometimes to gratify the love of the grotesque, not because natural means could not have accomplished what was sought, but through sheer love of revelling in the supernatural. In Scripture the natural is never superseded when it is capable of either helping or accomplishing the end. The east wind helps to dry the Red Sea, although the rod of Moses has to be stretched out for the completion of the work. The angel of God knocks Peter's chains from his limbs and opens the prison gates for him, but leaves him to find his way thereafter as best he can. So now. It is now in the power of the people to prepare them victuals, and though God might easily feed them as He has fed them miraculously for forty years, He leaves them to find food for themselves. In all cases the co-operation of the Divine and the human is carried out with an instructive combination of generosity and economy; man is never to be idle; alike in the affairs of the temporal and the spiritual life, the Divine energy always stimulates to activity, never lulls to sleep.

A little explanation is needed respecting the time when Joshua said the Jordan must be crossed—"within three days." If the narrative of the first two chapters be taken in chronological order, more than three days must have elapsed between the issuing of this order and the crossing of the river, because it is expressly stated that the two spies who were sent to examine Jericho hid themselves for three days in the mountains, and thereafter recrossed the Jordan and returned to

Joshua (ii. 22). But it is quite in accordance with the practice of Scripture narrative to introduce an episode out of its chronological place so that it may not break up the main record. It is now generally held that the spies were sent off before Joshua issued this order to the people, because it is not likely that he would have committed himself to a particular day before he got the information which he expected the spies to bring. In any case, it is plain that no needless delay was allowed. Half a week more and Jordan would be crossed, although the means of crossing it had not yet been made apparent; and then the people would be actually in their own inheritance, within the very country which in the dim ages of the past had been promised to their fathers.

Yes, the people generally; but already an arrangement had been made for the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh on the east side of the river. How, then, were they to act in the present crisis? That had been determined between them and Moses when they got leave to occupy the lands of Sihon and Og, on account of their suitableness for their abundant flocks and herds. It had been arranged then that, leaving their cattle and their children, a portion of the men likewise, the rest would cross the river with their brethren and take their share of the toils and risks of the conquest of Western Canaan. All that Joshua needs to do now is to remind them of this arrangement. Happily there was no reluctance on their part to fulfil it. There was no going back from their word, even though they might have found a loophole of escape. They might have said that as the conquest of Sihon and Og had been accomplished so easily, so the conquest of the western tribes would be equally simple. Or they might have said that the nine tribes and a

half could furnish quite a large enough army to dispossess the Canaanites. Or they might have discovered that their wives and children were exposed to dangers they had not apprehended, and that it would be necessary for the entire body of the men to remain and protect them. But they fell back on no such after thought. They kept their word at no small cost of toil and danger, and furnished thereby a perpetual lesson for those who, having made a promise under pressure, are tempted to resile from it when the pressure is removed. Fidelity to engagements is a noble quality, just as laxity in regard to them is a miserable sin. Even Pagan Rome could boast of a Regulus who kept his oath by returning to Carthage, though it was to encounter a miserable death. In the fifteenth psalm it is a feature in the portrait of the man who is to abide in God's tabernacle and dwell in His holy hill, that he "sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not."

One arrangement was made by these transjordanic tribes that was perfectly reasonable—a portion of the men remained to guard their families and their property. The number that passed over was forty thousand (Josh. iv. 13), whereas the entire number of men capable of bearing arms (dividing Manasseh into two) was a hundred and ten thousand (Num. xxvi. 7, 18, and 34). But the contingent actually sent was amply sufficient to redeem the promise, and, consisting probably of picked men, was no doubt a very efficient portion of the force. The actual fighting force of the other tribes would probably be in the same proportion to the whole; and there, too, a section would have to be left to guard the women, children, and flocks, so that in point of fact the labours and dangers of the conquest were about equally divided between all the tribes.

Here, then, was an edifying spectacle: those who had been first provided for did not forget those who had not yet obtained any settlement; but held themselves bound to assist their brethren until they should be as comfortably settled as themselves.

It was a grand testimony against selfishness, a grand assertion of brotherhood, a beautiful manifestation of loyalty and public spirit; and, we may add, an instructive exhibition of the working of the method by which God's providence seeks to provide for the dissemination of many blessings among the children of men. It was an act of socialism, without the drawbacks which most forms of socialism involve.

God has allowed many differences in the lots of mankind, bestowing on some ample means, for which they toiled not neither did they spin; bestowing, often on the same individuals, a higher position in life, with corresponding social influence; setting some nations in the van of the world's march, bestowing on some churches very special advantages and means of influence; and it is a great question that arises—what obligations rest on these favoured individuals and communities? Does God lay any duty on them toward the rest of mankind?

The inquiry in its full scope is too wide for our limits; let us restrict ourselves to the element in respect of which the transjordanic tribes had the advantage of the others—the element of time. What do those who have received their benefits early owe to those who are behind them in time?

The question leads us first to the family constitution, but there is really no question here. The obligations of parents to their children are the obligations of those who have already got their settlement to those who have not; of those who have already got means, and

strength, and experience, and wisdom to those who have not yet had time to acquire them. It is only the vilest of our race that refuse to own their obligations here, and this only after their nature has been perverted and demonized by vice. To all others it is an obligation which amply repays itself. The affection between parent and child in every well-ordered house sweetens the toil that often falls so heavily on the elders; while the pleasure of seeing their children filling stations of respectability and usefulness, and the enjoyment of their affection, even after they have gone out into the world, amply repay their past labours, and greatly enrich the joys of life.

We advance to the relation of the rich to the poor, especially of those who are born to riches to those who are born to obscurity and toil. Had the providence of God no purpose in this arrangement? You who come into the world amid luxury and splendour, who have never required to work for a single comfort, who have the means of gratifying expensive tastes, and who grudge no expenditure on the objects of your fancy:—was it meant that you were to sustain no relation of help and sympathy to the poor, especially your neighbours, your tenants, or your workpeople? Do you fulfil the obligations of life when, pouring into your coffers the fruits of other men's toil, you hurry off to the resorts of wealth and fashion, intent only on your own enjoyment, and without a thought of the toiling multitude you leave at home? Is it right of you to leave deserving people to fall peradventure into starvation and despair, without so much as turning a finger to prevent it? What are you doing for the widows and orphans? Selfish and sinful beings! let these old Hebrews read you a lesson of condemnation!

They could not selfishly enjoy their comfortable homes till they had done their part on behalf of their brethren, for wherever there is a brotherly heart a poor brother's welfare is as dear as one's own.

Then there is the case of nations, and pre-eminently of our own. Some races attain to civilization, and order, and good government sooner than others. They have all the benefit of settled institutions and enlightened opinion, of discoveries in the arts and sciences, and of the manifold comforts and blessings with which life is thus enriched, while other nations are sunk in barbarism and convulsed by disorder. But how much more prone are such nations to claim the rights of superiority than to play the part of the elder brother! We are thankful for the great good that has been done in India, and in other countries controlled by the older nations. But even in the case of India, how many have gone there not to benefit the natives, but with the hope of enriching themselves. How ready have many been to indulge their own vices at the cost of the natives, and how little has it pained them to see them becoming the slaves of new vices that have sunk them lower than before. Our Indian opium traffic, and our drink traffic generally among native races—what is their testimony to our brotherly feeling? What are we to think of the white traders among the South Sea islands, stealing and robbing and murdering their feebler fellow-creatures? What are we to think of the traffic in slaves, and the inconceivable brutalities with which it is carried on? Or what are we to think of our traders at home, sending out in almost uncountable profusion the rum, and the gin, and the other drinks by which the poor weak natives are at once enticed, enslaved, and destroyed? Is there any development in selfishness that has ever

been heard of more heartless and horrible? Why can't they let them alone, if they will not try to benefit them? What can come to any man in the end but the well-merited punishment of those who out of sheer greed have made miserable savages tenfold more the children of hell than before?

We pass over the case of the early settlers in colonies, because there is hardly any obligation more generally recognised than that of such settlers to lend a helping hand to new arrivals. We go on to the case of Churches. The light of saving truth has come to some lands before others. We in this country have had our Christianity for centuries, and in these recent years have had so lively a dispensation of the gospel of Christ that many have felt more than ever His power to forgive, to comfort, to lift us up and bless us. Have we no duty to those parts of the earth which are still in the shadow of death? If we are not actually settled in the Promised Land, we are as good as settled, because we have the Divine promise, and we believe in that promise. But what of those who are yet "without Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world"? Have we no responsibility for them? Have we no interest in that Divine plan which seeks to use those who first receive the light as instruments of imparting it to the rest? Infidels object that Christianity cannot be of God, because if Christianity furnishes the only Divine remedy for sin it would have been diffused as widely as the evil for which it is the cure. Our reply is, that God's plan is to give the light first to some, and to charge them to give it freely and cordially to others. We say, moreover, that this plan is a wholesome one for those

who are called to work it, because it draws out and strengthens what is best and noblest in them, and because it tends to form very loving bonds between those who give and those who get the benefit. But what if the first recipients of the light fold their hands, content to have got the blessing themselves, and decline to do their part in sending it to the rest? Surely there is here no ordinary combination of sins! Indolence and selfishness at the root, and, with these, a want of all public spirit and beneficent activity; and, moreover, not mere neglect but contempt of the Divine plan by which God has sought the universal diffusion of the blessing. Again we say, look to these men of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh. They were not the *élite* of the race of Israel. Their fathers, at least in the case of Reuben and Dan, were not among the more honoured of the sons of Jacob. And yet they had the grace to think of their brethren, when so many among us are utterly careless of ours. And not only to think of them, but to go over the Jordan and fight for them, possibly die for them; nor would they think of returning to the comfort of their homes till they had seen their brethren in the west settled in theirs.

And this readiness of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh to fulfil the engagement under which they had come to Moses, was not the only gratifying occurrence which Joshua met with on announcing the impending crossing of the Jordan. For the whole people declared very cordially their acceptance of Joshua as their leader, vowed to him the most explicit fidelity, declared their purpose to pay him the same honour as they had paid to Moses, and denounced a sentence of death against any one that would not hearken to his words in all that he commanded them.

Joshua, in fact, obtained from them a promise of loyalty beyond what they had ever given to Moses till close on his death. It was the great trial of Moses that the people so habitually complained of him and worried him, embittering his life by ascribing to him even the natural hardships of the wilderness, as well as the troubles that sprang directly from their sins. It is the unwillingness of his people to trust him, after all he has sacrificed for them, that gives such a pathetic interest to the life of Moses, and makes him, more than perhaps any other Old Testament prophet, so striking an example of unrequited affection. After crossing the Red Sea, all the marvels of that deliverance from Pharaoh of which he had been the instrument are swallowed up and forgotten by the little inconveniences of the journey. And afterwards, when they are doomed to the forty years' wandering, they are ready enough to blame him for it, forgetting how he fell down before God and pled for them when God threatened to destroy them. Moreover, his enactments against the idolatry they loved so well made him anything but popular, to say nothing of the burdensome ceremonial which he enjoined them to observe. The time of real loyalty to Moses was just the little period before his death, when he led them against Sihon and Og, and a great stretch of fertile and beautiful land fell into their hands. Moses had just gained the greatest victory of his life, he had just become master of the hearts of his people, when he was called away. For Moses at last did gain the people's hearts, and those to whom Joshua appealed could say without irony or sarcasm, "According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee."

In point of fact a great change had been effected on

the people at last. Moses had laboured, and Joshua now entered into his labours. The same thing has often occurred in history, and notably in our own. In civil life how much do we owe to the noble champions of freedom of other days, through whose patriotism, courage, and self-denial the hard fight was fought and the victory won that enables us to sit under our vine and under our fig tree. In ecclesiastical life was it not the blood of the martyrs and the struggles of those of whom the world was not worthy, who wandered in deserts and in mountains and in dens and caves of the earth, that won for us the freedom and the peace in which we now rejoice? What blessings we owe to those that have gone before us! And how can we better discharge our obligations to them than by hastening to the aid of those who have but emerged from the period of struggle and suffering, like the Christians of Madagascar or of Uganda, whose fearful sufferings and awful deaths under the merciless rule of heathen kings made Christendom stand aghast, and drew a wail of anguish from her bosom?

The unanimity of the people in their loyalty to Joshua is a touching sight. So far as appears there was not one discordant note in that harmonious burst of loyalty. No Korah, Dathan, or Abiram rose up to decline his rule and embarrass him in his new position. It is a beautiful sight, the united loyalty of a great nation. Nothing more beautiful has ever been known in the long reign of Queen Victoria than the crowding of her people in hundreds of thousands to witness her procession to St. Paul's on that morning when she went to return thanks for the rescue of her eldest son from the very jaws of death. Not one discordant note was uttered, not one disloyal feeling was known; the

vast multitude were animated by the spirit of sympathy and affection for one who had tried to do her duty as a queen and as a mother. It was a sight not unlike to this that was seen in the streets of New York at the centennial celebration of the inauguration of George Washington as first President of the United States. One was thrilled by the thought that not only the multitude that thronged the streets, but the representatives of the whole nation, gathered in their churches throughout the land, were animated by a common sentiment of gratitude to the man whose wisdom and courage had laid the foundation of all the prosperity and blessing of the last hundred years. Are not such scenes the pattern of that spirit of loyalty which the entire race of man owes to Him who by His blood redeemed the world, and whose rule and influence, if the world would but accept of it, are so beneficent and so blessed? Yet how far are we from such a state! How few are the hearts that throb with true loyalty to the Saviour, and whose most fervent aspiration for the world is, that it would only throw down its weapons of rebellion, and give to him its hearty allegiance! Strange that the Old Testament Joshua should have got at once what eighteen hundred years have failed to bring to the New Testament Jesus! God hasten the day of universal light and universal love, when He shall reign from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth!

> "One song employs all nations, and all cry
> 'Worthy the Lamb, for He was slain for us'!
> The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks
> Shout to each other, and the mountain tops
> From distant mountains catch the flying joy,
> Till nation after nation taught the strain
> Earth rolls the rapturous Hosanna round."

CHAPTER VII.

THE SPIES IN JERICHO.

JOSHUA ii.

IT was not long ere Joshua found an occasion not only for the exercise of that courage to which he had been so emphatically called both by God and the people, but for calling on others to practise the same manly virtue. For the duty which he laid on the two spies—detectives we should now call them—to enter Jericho and bring a report of its condition, was perhaps the most perilous to which it was possible for men to be called. It was like sending them into a den of lions, and expecting them to return safe and sound. Evidently he was happy in finding two men ready for the duty and the risk. Young men they are called further on (vi. 23), and it is quite likely that they were leading men in their tribes. No doubt they might disguise themselves, they might divest themselves of anything in dress that was characteristically Hebrew, they might put on the clothes of neighbouring peasants, and carry a basket of produce for sale in the city; and as for language, they might be able to use the Canaanite dialect and imitate the Canaanite accent. But if they did try any such disguise, they must have known that it would be of doubtful efficacy; the officials of Jericho could not fail to be keenly on the watch, and

no disguise could hide the Hebrew features, or divest them wholly of the air of foreigners. Nevertheless the two men had courage for the risky enterprise. Doubtless it was the courage that sprang from faith; it was in God's service they went, and God's protection would not fail them. To be able to find agents so willing and so suitable was a proof to Joshua that God had already begun to fulfil His promises.

Joshua had been a spy himself, and it was natural enough that he should think of the same mode of reconnoitring the country, now that they were again on the eve of making the entrance into it which they should have made nearly forty years before. There is no reason to think that in taking this step Joshua acted presumptuously, proceeding on his own counsel when he should have sought counsel of God. For Joshua might rightly infer that he ought to take this course inasmuch as it had been followed before with God's approval in the case of the twelve. Its purpose was twofold—to obtain information and confirmation. Information as to the actual condition and spirit of the Canaanites, as to the view they took of the approaching invasion of the Israelites, and the impression that had been made on them by all the remarkable things that had happened in the desert; and confirmation, —new proof for his own people that God was with them, fresh encouragement to go up bravely to the attack, and fresh assurance that not one word would ever fail them of all the things which the Lord had promised.

We follow the two men as they leave Shittim, so named from the masses of bright acacia which shed their glory over the plain; then cross the river at "the fords," which, flooded though they were, were still practicable for

swimmers; enter the gates of Jericho, and move along the streets. In such a city as Jericho, and among such an immoral people as the Canaanites, it was not strange that they should fall in with a woman of Rahab's occupation, and should receive an invitation to her house. Some commentators have tried to make out that she was not so bad as she is represented, but only an innkeeper; but the meaning of the word both here and as translated in Heb. xi. and James ii. is beyond contradiction. Others have supposed that she was one of the harlot-priestesses of Ashtoreth, but in that case she would have had her dwelling in the precincts of a temple, not in an out-of-the-way place on the walls of the city. We are to remember that in the degraded condition of public opinion in Canaan, as indeed much later in the case of the Hetairai of Athens, her occupation was not regarded as disgraceful, neither did it banish her from her family, nor break up the bonds of interest and affection between them, as it must do in every moral community.[1] It was not accompanied with that self-contempt and self-loathing which in other circumstances are its fruits. We may quite easily understand how the spies might enter her house simply

[1] It is somewhat remarkable that the present village of Riha, at or near the site of the ancient Jericho, is noted for its licentiousness. The men, it is said, wink at the infidelity of the women, a trait of character singularly at variance with the customs of the Bedouin. "At our encampment over 'Ain Terâbeh (says Robinson) the night before we reached this place, we overheard our Arabs asking the Khatib for a paper or written charm to protect them from the women of Jericho; and from their conversation it seemed that illicit intercourse between the latter and strangers that come here is regarded as a matter of course. Strange that the inhabitants of the valley should have retained this character from the earliest ages; and that the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah should still flourish upon the same accursed soil."—"Researches in Palestine," i. 553.

for the purpose of getting the information they desired, as modern detectives when tracking out crime so often find it necessary to win the confidence and worm out the secrets of members of the same wretched class. But the emissaries of Joshua were in too serious peril, in too devout a mood, and in too high-strung a state of nerve to be at the mercy of any Delilah that might wish to lure them to careless pleasure. Their faith, their honour, their patriotism, and their regard to their leader Joshua, all demanded the extremest circumspection and self-control; they were, like Peter, walking on the sea; unless they kept their eye on their Divine protector, their courage and presence of mind would fail them, they would be at the mercy of their foes.

Whether disguised or not, the two men had evidently been noticed and suspected when they entered the city, which they seem to have done in the dusk of evening. But, happily for them, the streets of Jericho were not patrolled by policemen ready to pounce on suspicious persons, and run them in for judicial examination. The king or burgomaster of the place seems to have been the only person with whom it lay to deal with them. Whoever had detected them, after following them to Rahab's house, had then to resort to the king's residence and give their information to him. Rahab had an inkling of what was likely to follow, and being determined to save the men, she hid them on the roof of the house, and covered them with stalks of flax, stored there for domestic use. When, after some interval, the king's messengers came, commanding her to bring them forth since they were Israelites come to search the city, she was ready with her plausible tale. Two men had indeed come to her, but she could not tell who they were,—it was no business of hers to be

inquisitive about them; the men had left just before the gates were shut, and doubtless, if they were alert and pursued after them, they would overtake them, for they could not be far off. The king's messengers had not half the wit of the woman; they took her at her word, made no search of her house, but set out on the wild-goose chase on which she had sent them. Sense and spirit failed them alike.

We are not prepared for the remarkable development of her faith that followed. This first Canaanite across the Jordan with whom the Israelites met was no ordinary person. Rays of Divine light had entered that unhallowed soul, not to be driven back, not to be hidden under a bushel, but to be welcomed, and ultimately improved and followed. Our minds are carried forward to what was so impressive in the days of our Lord, when the publicans and the harlots entered into the kingdom before the scribes and the pharisees. We are called to admire the riches of the grace of God, who does not scorn the moral leper, but many a time lays His hand upon him, and says "I will, be thou clean." "They shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

In the first place, Rahab made a most explicit confession of her faith, not only in Jehovah as the God of the Hebrews, but in Him as the one only God of heaven and earth. It would have been nothing had she been willing to give to the Hebrew God a place, a high place, or even the highest place among the gods. Her faith went much further. "The Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and in earth beneath."

This is an exclusive faith—Baal and Ashtoreth are nowhere. What a remarkable conviction to take hold of such a mind! All the traditions of her youth, all the opinions of her neighbours, all the terrors of her priests set at nought, swept clean off the board, in face of the overwhelming evidence of the sole Godhead of Jehovah!

Again, she explained the reason for this faith. "We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed." The woman has had an eye to see and an ear to hear. She has not gazed in stupid amazement on the marvellous tokens of Divine power displayed before the world, nor accepted the sophistry of sceptics referring all these marvels to accidental thunderstorms and earthquakes and high winds. She knew better than to suppose that a nation of slaves by their own resources could have eluded all the might of Pharaoh, subsisted for forty years in the wilderness, and annihilated the forces of such renowned potentates as Sihon and Og. She was no philosopher, and could not have reasoned on the doctrine of causation, but her common sense taught her that you cannot have extraordinary effects without corresponding causes. It is one of the great weaknesses of modern unbelief that with all its pretensions to philosophy, it is constantly accepting effects without an adequate cause. Jesus Christ, though He revolutionized the world, though He founded an empire to which that of the Cæsars is not for a moment to be compared, though all that were about Him admitted His supernatural power and person, after all, was nothing but a man. The gospel that has

brought peace and joy to so many weary hearts, that has transformed the slaves of sin into children of heaven, that has turned cannibals into saints, and fashioned so many an angelic character out of the rude blocks of humanity, is but a cunningly devised fable. What contempt for such sophistries, such vain explanations of facts patent to all would this poor woman have shown! How does she rebuke the many that keep pottering in poor natural explanations of plain supernatural facts, instead of manfully admitting that it is the Arm of God that has been revealed, and the Voice of God that has spoken!

Further, Rahab informed the spies that when they heard these things the inhabitants of the land had become faint, their hearts melted, and there remained no more courage in them because of the Israelites. For they felt that the tremendous Power that had desolated Egypt and dried up the sea, that had crushed Sihon King of the Amorites and Og King of Bashan like nuts under the feet of a giant, was now close upon themselves. What could they do to arrest the march of such a power, and avert the ruin which it was sure to inflict? They had neither resource nor refuge—their hearts melted in them. It is when Divine Power draws near to men, or when men draw near to Divine Power that they get the right measure of its dimensions and the right sense of their own impotence. Caligula could scoff at the gods at a distance, but in any calamity no man was more prostrate with terror. It is easy for the atheist or the agnostic to assume a bold front when God is far off, but woe betide him when He draws near in war, in pestilence, or in death!

If we ask, How could Rahab have such a faith and yet be a harlot? or how could she have such faith in

God and yet utter that tissue of falsehoods about the spies with which she deluded the messengers of the king? we answer that light comes but gradually and slowly to persons like Rahab. The conscience is but gradually enlightened. How many men have been slaveholders after they were Christians! Worse than that, did not the godly John Newton, one of the two authors of the Olney hymns, continue for some time in the slave trade, conveying cargoes of his fellow-creatures stolen from their homes, before he awoke to to a sense of its infamy? Are there no persons among us calling themselves Christians engaged in traffic that brings awful destruction to the bodies and souls of their fellow-men? That Rahab should have continued as she was after she threw in her lot with God's people is inconceivable; but there can be no doubt how she was living when she first comes into Bible history. And as to her falsehoods, though some have excused lying when practised in order to save life, we do not vindicate her on that ground. All falsehood, especially what is spoken to those who have a right to trust us, must be offensive to the God of truth, and the nearer men get to the Divine image, through the growing closeness of their Divine fellowship, the more do they recoil from it. Rahab was yet in the outermost circle of the Church, just touching the boundary; the nearer she got to the centre the more would she recoil alike from the foulness and the falseness of her early years.

We have to notice further in Rahab a determination to throw in her lot with the people of God. In spirit she had ceased to be a Canaanite and become an Israelite. She showed this by taking the side of the spies against the king, and exposing herself to certain

and awful punishment if it had been found out that they were in her house. And her confidential conversation with them before she sent them away, her cordial recognition of their God, her expression of assurance that the land would be theirs, and her request for the protection of herself and her relations when the Israelites should become masters of Jericho, all indicated one who desired to renounce the fellowship of her own people and cast in her lot with the children of God. That she was wholly blameless in the way in which she went about this, in favouring the spies against her own nation in this underhand way, we will not affirm; but one cannot look for a high sense of honour in such a woman. Still, whatever may be said against her, the fact of her remarkable faith remains conspicuous and beyond dispute, all the more striking, too, that she is the last person in whom we should have expected to find anything of the kind. That faith beyond doubt was destined to expand and fructify in her heart, giving birth to virtues and graces that made her after life a great contrast to what it had been. No doubt the words of the Apostle might afterwards have been applied to her—"Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of the Lord."

And yet, though her faith may at this time have been but as a grain of mustard seed, we see two effects of it that are not to be despised. One was her protection of the Lord's people, as represented by the spies; the other was her concern for her own relations. Father, mother, brothers, and sisters and all that they had, were dear to her, and she took measures for their safety when the destruction of Jericho should come. She exacted an oath of the two spies, and asked a

pledge of them, that they would all be spared when the crisis of the city arrived. And the men passed their oath and arranged for the protection of the family. No doubt it may be said that it was only their temporal welfare about which she expressed concern, and for which she made provision. But what more could she have been expected to do at that moment? What more could the two spies have engaged to secure? It was plain enough that if they were ever to obtain further benefit from fellowship with God's people, their lives must be preserved in the first instance from the universal destruction which was impending. Her anxiety for her family, like her anxiety for herself, may even then have begun to extend beyond things seen and temporal, and a fair vision of peace and joy may have begun to flit across her fancy at the thought of the vile and degrading idolatry of the Canaanites being displaced in them by the service of a God of holiness and of love. But neither was she far enough advanced to be able as yet to give expression to this hope, nor were the spies the persons to whom it would naturally have been communicated. The usual order in the Christian life is, that as anxiety about ourselves begins in a sense of personal danger and a desire for deliverance therefrom, so spiritual anxiety about the objects of our affection has usually the same beginning. But as it would be a miserable thing for the new life to stand still as soon as our personal safety was secured, so it would be a wretched affection that sought nothing more on behalf of our dearest friends. When, by accepting Christ, we get the blessing of personal safety, we only reach a height from which we see how many other things we need. We become ashamed of our unholy passions, our selfish hearts, our godless ways,

and we aspire, with an ardour which the world cannot understand, to purity and unselfishness and consecration to God. For our friends we desire the same; we feel for them as for ourselves, that the bondage and pollution of sin are degrading, and that there can be neither peace, nor happiness, nor real dignity for the soul until it is created anew after the image of God.

Some commentators have laid considerable stress on the line of scarlet thread that was to be displayed in the window by which the spies had been let down, as a token and remembrance that that house was to be spared when the victorious army should enter Jericho. In that scarlet thread they have seen an emblem of atonement, an emblem of the blood of Christ by which sinners are redeemed. To us it seems more likely that, in fixing on this as the pledge of safety, the spies had in view the blood sprinkled on the lintels and door posts of the Hebrew houses in Egypt by which the destroying angel was guided to pass them by. The scarlet rope had some resemblance to blood, and for this reason its special purpose might be more readily apprehended. Obviously the spies had no time to go into elaborate explanations at the moment. It is to be observed that, as the window looked to the outside of the city, the cord would be observed by the Israelites and the house recognised as they marched round and round, according to the instructions of Joshua. Not a man of all the host but would see it again and again, as they performed their singular march, and would mark the position of the house so carefully that its inmates, gathered together like the family of Noah in the ark, would be preserved in perfect safety.

The stratagem of Rahab, and the mode of flight which she recommended to the spies, fruits of woman's

ready wit and intuitive judgment, were both successful. She reminds us of the self-possession of Jael, or of Abigail, the wife of Nabal. In the dark, the spies escaped to the mountain,—the rugged rampart which bounded the valley of the Jordan on the west. Hiding in its sequestered crevices for three days, till the pursuit of the Jerichonians was over, they stole out under cover of darkness, recrossed the Jordan, told Joshua of their stirring and strange adventure, and wound up with the remark that the hearts of the people of the country were melting because of them. How often is this true, though unbelief cannot see it! When Jesus told His disciples that He beheld Satan fall as lightning from heaven, He taught us that those who set themselves against Him and His cause are fallen powers, no longer flushed with victory and hope, but defeated and dejected, and consciously unable to overcome the heaven-aided forces that are against them. Well for all Christian philanthropists and missionaries of the Cross, and brave assailants of lust and greed and vice and error, to bear this in mind! The cause of darkness never can triumph in the end, it has no power to rally and rush against the truth; if only the servants of Christ would be strong and of a good courage, they too would find that the boldest champions of the world do faint because of them.

When the spies return to Joshua and tell him all that has befallen them, he accepts their adventure as a token for good. They have not given him any hint how Jericho is to be taken; but, what is better, they have shown him that the outstretched arm of God has been seen by the heathen, and that the inhabitants of the country are paralysed on account of it. The two spies were a great contrast to the ten that accompanied

Joshua and Caleb so long before: the ten declared the land unassailable; the two looked on it as already conquered—"The Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land." Children of Israel, you must not be outdone in faith by a harlot; believe that God is with you, go up, and possess the land!

CHAPTER VIII.

JORDAN REACHED.

JOSHUA iii. 1—7.

THE host of Israel had been encamped for some time at Shittim on the east side of the river Jordan. It is well to understand the geographical position. The Jordan has its rise beyond the northern boundary of Palestine in three sources, the most interesting and beautiful of the three being one in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi. The three streamlets unite in the little lake now called Huleh, but Merom in Bible times. Issuing from Merom in a single stream the Jordan flows on to the lake of Galilee or Gennesareth, and from thence, in a singularly winding course, to the Dead Sea. Its course between the lake of Galilee and the Dead Sea is through a kind of ravine within a ravine; the outer ravine is the valley or plain of Jordan, now called by the Arabs El Ghor, which is about six miles in width at its northern part, and considerably more at its southern, where the Israelites now were. Within this "El Ghor" is a narrower ravine about three-quarters of a mile in width, in the inner part of which flows the river, its breadth varying from twenty to sixty yards. Some travellers say that the Jordan does not now rise so high as formerly, but others tell us they have seen it overflowing its banks

at the corresponding season. But "the plain" is not fertilized by the rising waters: hence the reason why the banks of the river are not studded with towns as in Egypt. It is quite possible, however, that in the days of Abraham and Lot artificial irrigation was made use of: hence the description given of it then that it was "like the land of Egypt" (Gen. xiii. 10). If it be remarked as strange that Jordan should have overflowed his banks "in time of harvest" (Josh. iii. 15) when usually rain does not fall in Palestine, it is to be remembered that all the sources of the Jordan are fountains, and that fountains do not usually feel the effects of the rain until some time after it has fallen. The harvest referred to is the barley harvest, and near Jericho that harvest must have occurred earlier than throughout the country on account of the greater heat.

The host of Israel lay encamped at Shittim, or Abel Shittim, "the meadow or moist place of the acacias," somewhere in the Arboth-Moab or fields of Moab. The exact spot is unknown, but it was near the foot of the Moabite mountains, where the streams, coming down from the heights on their way to the Jordan, caused a luxuriant growth of acacias, such as are still found in some of the adjacent parts. Sunk as this part of the plain is far below the level of the Mediterranean, and enclosed by the mountains behind it as by the walls of a furnace, it possesses an almost tropical climate which, though agreeable enough in winter and early spring, would have been unbearable to the Israelites in the height of summer. It was while Israel "abode in Shittim," during the lifetime of Moses, that they were seduced by the Moabites to join in the idolatrous revels of Baal-peor and punished with the plague. The acacia groves gave facilities for the unhallowed

revelling. That chastisement had brought them into a better spirit, and now they were prepared for better things.

The Jordan was not crossed then by bridges nor by ferry boats; the only way of crossing was by fords. The ford nearest to Jericho, now called El Mashra'a, is well known; it was the ford the Israelites would have used had the river been fordable; and perhaps the tradition is correct that there the crossing actually took place. When the spies crossed and recrossed the river it must have been by swimming, as it was too deep for wading at the time; but though this mode of crossing was possible for individuals, it was manifestly out of the question for a host. That the Israelites could by no possibility cross at that season must have been the forlorn hope of the people of Jericho; possibly they smiled at the folly of Joshua in choosing such a time of the year, and asked in derision, How is he ever to get over?

The appointed day for leaving Shittim has come, and Joshua, determined to lose no time, rises "early in the morning." Nor is it without a purpose that so often in the Old Testament narrative, when men of might commence some great undertaking, we are told that it was early in the morning. In all hot climates work in the open air, if done at all, must be done early in the morning or in the evening. But, besides this, morning is the appropriate time for men of great energy and decision to be astir; and it readily connects itself with the New Testament text—"Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." The benefits of an early start for all kinds of successful work are in the proverbs of all nations; and we may add that few have reached a high position in the Christian life who

could not say, in the spirit of the hymn, "early in the morning my song shall rise to Thee." Nor can it easily be understood how under other conditions the precept could be fulfilled—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

From Shittim to the banks of the Jordan is an easy journey of a few miles, the road being all over level ground, so that the march was probably finished before the sun had risen high. However strong their faith, it could not be without a certain tremor of heart that the people would behold the swollen river, and mark the walls and towers of Jericho a few miles beyond. Three days are to be allowed, if not for physical, certainly for moral and spiritual preparation for the crossing of the river. The three days are probably the same as those adverted to before (chap. i. 3), just as the order to select twelve men to set up twelve stones (chap. iii. 12) is probably the same as that more fully detailed in chap. iv. 2. The host is assembled in orderly array on the east bank of the Jordan, when the officers pass through to give instructions as to their further procedure. Three such instructions are given.

First, they are to follow the ark. Whenever they see the priests that bear it in motion, they are to move from their places and follow it. There was no longer the pillar of fire to guide them—that was a wilderness-symbol of God's presence, now superseded by a more permanent symbol—the ark. Both symbols represented the same great truth—the gracious presence and guidance of God, and both called the people to the same duty and privilege, and to the same assurance of absolute safety so long as they followed the Lord. Familiar sights are apt to lose their significance, and the people must have become so familiar with the

wilderness-pillar that they would hardly think what it meant. Now a different symbol is brought forward. The ark carried in solemn procession by the priests is now the appointed token of God's guidance, and therefore the object to be unhesitatingly followed. A blessed truth for all time was clearly shadowed forth. Follow God implicitly and unhesitatingly in every time of danger, and you are safe. Set aside the counsels of casuistry, of fear, and of worldly wisdom; find out God's will and follow it through good report and through evil report, and you will be right. It was thus that Joshua and Caleb did, and counselled the people to do, when they came back from exploring the land; and now these two were reaping the benefit; while the generation, that would have been comfortably settled in the land if they had done the same, had perished in the wilderness on account of their unbelief.

Secondly, a span of two thousand cubits was to be left between the people and the ark. Some have thought that this was designed as a token of reverence; but this is not the reason assigned. Had it been designed as a token of reverence, it would have been prescribed long before, as soon as the ark was constructed, and began to be carried with the host through the wilderness. The intention was, "that ye may know the way by which you must go" (ver. 4). If this arrangement had not been made, the course of the ark through the flat plains of the Jordan would not have been visible to the mass of the host, but only to those in the immediate neighbourhood, and the people would have been liable to straggle and fall into confusion, if not to diverge altogether. In all cases, when we are looking out for Divine guidance, it is of supreme importance that there be nothing in the way to obscure the object or to

distort our vision. Alas, how often is this direction disregarded! How often do we allow our prejudices, or our wishes, or our worldly interests to come between us and the Divine direction we profess to desire! At some turn of our life we feel that we ought not to take a decisive step without asking guidance from above. But our own wishes bear strongly in a particular direction, and we are only too prone to conclude that God is in favour of our plan. We do not act honestly; we lay stress on all that is in favour of what we like; we think little of considerations of the opposite kind. And when we announce our decision, if the matter concern others, we are at pains to tell them that we have made it matter of prayer. But why make it matter of prayer if we do so with prejudiced minds? It is only when our eye is single that the whole body is full of light. This clear space of two thousand cubits between the people and the ark deserves to be remembered. Let us have a like clear space morally between us and God when we go to ask His counsel, lest peradventure we not only mistake His directions, but bring disaster on ourselves and dishonour on His name.

Thirdly, the people were instructed,—"Sanctify yourselves, for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you." It is an instinct of our nature that when we are to meet with some one of superior worldly rank preparation must be made for the meeting. When Joseph was summoned into the presence of Pharaoh, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon, "he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh." The poorest subject of the realm would try to wear his best and to look his best in the presence of his sovereign. But while "man looketh on the outward appearance the Lord looketh on the heart."

And our very instincts teach us, that the heart needs to be prepared when God is drawing near. It is not in our ordinary careless mood that we ought to stand before Him who "sets our iniquities before Him, our secret sins in the light of His countenance." Grant that we can neither atone for our sin, nor cleanse our hearts without His grace; nevertheless, in God's presence everything that is possible ought to be done to remove the abominable thing which He hates, so that He may not be affronted and offended by its presence. Most appropriate, therefore, was Joshua's counsel,—"Sanctify yourselves, for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you." He will surpass all that your eyes have seen since that night, much to be remembered, when He divided the sea. He will give you a token of His love and care that will amaze you, much though you have seen of it in the wilderness, and in the country of Sihon and Og. Expect great things, prepare for great things; and let the chief of your preparations be to sanctify yourselves, for "the foolish shall not stand in His sight, and He hateth all workers of iniquity."

Next day (compare ver. 5, "to-morrow," and ver. 7, "this day") Joshua turns to the priests and bids them "take up the ark of the covenant." The priests obey; "they take up the ark, and go before the people."

Shall we take notice of the assertion of some that all those parts of the narrative which refer to priests and religious service were introduced by a writer bent on glorifying the priesthood? Or must we repel the insinuation that the introduction of the ark, and the miraculous effects ascribed to its presence, are mere myths? If they are mere myths, they are certainly myths of a very peculiar kind. Twice only in this book is the ark associated with miraculous events—at

the crossing of the Jordan and at the taking of Jericho. If these were myths, why was the myth confined to these two occasions? When mythical writers find a remarkable talisman they introduce it at all sorts of times. Why was the ark not brought to the siege of Ai? Why was it absent from the battles of Bethhoron and Merom? Why was its presence restricted to the Jordan and Jericho, unless it was God's purpose to inspire confidence at first through the visible symbol of His presence, but leave the people afterwards to infer His presence by faith?

The taking up of the ark by the priests was a decisive step. There could be no resiling now from the course entered on. The priests with the ark must advance, and it will be seen whether Joshua has been uttering words without foundation, or whether he has been speaking in the name of God. Shall mere natural forces be brought into play, or shall the supernatural might of heaven come to the conflict, and show that God is faithful to His promise?

Let us put ourselves in Joshua's position. We do not know in what manner the communications were carried on between him and Jehovah of which we have the record under the words "the Lord spake unto Joshua." Was it by an audible voice? Or was it by impressions on Joshua's mind of a kind that could not have originated with himself, but that were plainly the result of Divine influence? In any case, they were such as to convey to Joshua a very clear knowledge of the Divine will. Yet even in the best of men nature is not so thoroughly subdued in such circumstances but that the shadow of anxiety and fear is liable to flit across them. They crave something like a personal pledge that all will go well. Hence the seasonableness

of the assurance now given to Joshua—"This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee." How full and manifold the assurance! First, I will magnify thee. I will endue thee with supernatural might, and that will give you authority and weight, corresponding to the position in which you stand. Further, this shall be but the beginning of a process which will be renewed as often as there is occasion for it. "This day I will *begin*." You are not to go a warfare on your own charges, but "as your days, so shall your strength be." Moreover, this exaltation of your person and office will take place "in the sight of all Israel," so that no man of them shall ever be justified in refusing you allegiance and obedience. And to sum up—you shall be just as Moses was; the resources of My might will be as available for you as they were for him. After this, what misgivings could Joshua have? Could he doubt the generosity, the kindness, the considerateness of his Master? Here was a promise for life; and no doubt the more he put it to the test in after years the more trustworthy did he find it, and the more convincing was the proof it supplied of the mindfulness of God.

It is an experience which has been often repeated in the case of those who have had to undertake difficult work for their Master. Of all our misapprehensions, the most baseless and the most pernicious is, that God does not care much about us, and that we have not much to look for from Him. It is a misapprehension which dishonours God greatly, and which He is ever showing Himself most desirous to remove. It stands fearfully in the way of that spirit of trust by which God is so much honoured, and which He is ever

desirous that we should show. And those who have trusted God, and have gone forward to their work in His strength, have always found delightful evidence that their trust has not been in vain. What is the testimony of our great Christian philanthropists, our most successful missionaries, and other devoted Christian workers? Led to undertake enterprises far beyond their strength, and undergo responsibilities far beyond their means, we know not a single case in which they have not had ample proof of the mindfulness of their Master, and found occasion to wonder at the considerateness and the bountifulness which He has brought to bear upon their position. And is it not strange that we should be so slow to learn how infinite God is in goodness? That we should have no difficulty in believing in the goodness of a parent or of some kind friend who has always been ready to help us in our times of need, but so slow to realize this in regard to God, though we are constantly acknowledging in words that He is the best as well as the greatest of beings? It is a happy era in one's spiritual history when one escapes from one's contracted views of the love and liberality of God, and begins to realize that "as far as heaven is above the earth, so far are His ways above our ways, and His thoughts above our thoughts"; and when one comes to find that in one's times of need, whether arising from one's personal condition or from the requirements of public service, one may go to God for encouragement and help with more certainty of being well received than one may go to the best and kindest of friends.

It is sometimes said that the Old Testament presents us with a somewhat limited view of God's love. Certainly it is in the New Testament that we see it placed

in the brightest of all lights—the Cross, and that we find the argument in its most irresistible form—"He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him also, freely give us all things?" But one must have read the Old Testament in a very careless spirit if one has not been struck with its frequent and most impressive revelations of God's goodness. What scenes of gracious intercourse with His servants does it not present from first to last, what outpourings of affection, what yearnings of a father's heart! If there were many in Old Testament times whom these revelations left as heedless as they found them, there were certainly some whom they filled with wonder and roused to words of glowing gratitude. The Bible is not wont to repeat the same thought in the same words. But there is one truth and one only which we find repeated again and again in the Old Testament, in the same words, as if the writers were never weary of them—"For His mercy endureth for ever." Not only is it the refrain of a whole psalm (cxxxvi.), but we find it at the beginning of three other psalms (cvi., cvii., cxviii.), we find it in David's song of dedication when the ark was brought up to Jerusalem (1 Chron. xvi. 34), and we find also that on the same occasion a body of men, Heman and Jeduthun and others, were told off expressly "to give thanks to the Lord, because His mercy endureth for ever" (1 Chron. xvi. 41). This, indeed, is the great truth which gives the Old Testament its highest interest and beauty. In the New Testament, in its evangelical setting, it shines with incomparable brightness. Vividly realized, it makes the Christian's cup to flow over; as it fills him likewise with the hope of a joy to come—"a joy unspeakable and full of glory.'

CHAPTER IX.

JORDAN DIVIDED.

JOSHUA iii.

AT Joshua's command, the priests carrying the ark are again in motion. Bearing the sacred vessel on their shoulders, they make straight for the bank of the river. "The exact spot is unknown; it certainly cannot be that which the Greek tradition has fixed, where the eastern banks are sheer precipices of ten or fifteen feet high. Probably it was either immediately above or below, where the cliffs break away; above at the fords, or below where the river assumes a tamer character on its way to the Dead Sea."[1] Following the priests, at the interval of a full half-mile, was the host of Israel. "*There* was the mailed warrior with sword and shield, and the aged patriarch, trembling on his staff. Anxious mothers and timid maidens were there, and helpless infants of a day old; and there, too, were flocks and herds and all the possessions of a great nation migrating westward in search of a home. Before them lay their promised inheritance,

'While Jordan rolled between,'

full to the brim, and overflowing all its banks. Nevertheless, through it lies their road, and God commands the march. The priests take up the sacred ark and

[1] Stanley's "Sinai and Palestine," p. 303.

bear it boldly down to the brink; when lo! 'the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon a heap very far from the city Adam, that is before Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the Salt Sea, failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho.' And thus, too, has all-conquering faith carried the thousand times ten thousand of God's people in triumph through the Jordan of death to the Canaan of eternal rest."[1]

The description of the parting of the waters is clear enough in the main, though somewhat obscure in detail. The obscurity arises from the meaningless expression in the Authorized Version, "very far from the city Adam, which is beside Zaretan." The Revised rendering gives a much more natural meaning—"rose up in one heap, very far off, at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan." The names Adam and Zaretan occur nowhere else in Scripture, nor are they mentioned by Josephus; some think we have a relic of Adam in the first part of ed-Damieh, the name of a ford, and others, following the rendering of the Septuagint, which has ἕως μέρους Καριαθιαρίμ, consider the final "arim" to be equivalent to "adim" or "adam," the Hebrew letter "r" being almost the same as "d." What we are taught is, that the waters were cut off from the descending river a long way up, while down below the whole channel was laid bare as far as the Dead Sea. The miracle involved an accumulation of water in the upper reaches of the river, and as it was obviously undesirable that this should continue for a long time, enough of the channel was laid bare to enable the great host to cross rapidly in a broad belt, and without excitement or con-

[1] "Land and Book," vol. ii., pp. 460-61.

fusion. The sceptical objection is completely obviated that it was physically impossible for so vast a host to make the passage in a short time.

As soon as the waters began to retreat, after the feet of the priests were planted in them, the priests passed on to the middle of the channel, and stood there "firm, on dry ground," until all the people were passed clean over. The vast host crossed at once, and drew up on the opposite bank. That no attempt was made by the men of Jericho, which was only about five miles off, to attack them and stop their passage, can be explained only on the supposition that they were stricken with panic. One inhabitant undoubtedly heard of the passage without surprise. Rahab could feel no astonishment that the arm of God should thus be made bare before the people whom He was pledged to protect and guide. As little could she wonder at the paralysis which had petrified her own people.

The priests passed on before the people, and stood firm in the midst of the river until the whole host had passed. It was both a becoming thing that they should go before, and that they should stand so firm. It is not always that either priests or Christian ministers have set the example of going before in any hazardous undertaking. They have not always moved so steadily in the van of great movements, nor stood so firmly in the midst of the river. What shall we say of those whose idea, whether of Hebrew priesthood or of Christian ministry, has been that of a mere office, that of men ordained to perform certain mechanical functions, in whom personal character and personal example signified little or nothing? Is it not infinitely nearer to the Bible view that the ministers of religion are the leaders of the people, and that they ought as such to be ever

foremost in zeal, in holiness, in self-denial, in victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil? And of all men ought they not to stand firm? Where are Mr. Byends, and Mr. Facing-Both-Ways, and Mr. Worldly-Wiseman more out of place than in the ministry? Where does even the world look more for consistency and devotion and fearless regard to the will of God? What should we think of an army where the officers counted it enough to see to the drill and discipline of the men, and in the hour of battle confined themselves to mere mechanical duties, and were outstripped in self-denial, in courage, in dash and daring by the commonest of their soldiers? Happy the Church where the officers are officers indeed! Feeling ever that their place is in the front rank of the battle and in the vanguard of every perilous enterprise, and that it is their part to set the men an example of unwavering firmness even when the missiles of death are whistling or bursting on every side!

Who shall try to picture the feelings of the people during that memorable crossing? The outstretched arm of God was even more visibly shown than in the crossing of the Red Sea, for in that case a natural cause, the strong east wind, contributed something to the effect, while in this case no secondary cause was employed, the drying up of the channel being due solely to miracle. Who among all that host could fail to feel that God was with them? And how solemn yet cheering must the thought have been alike to the men of war looking forward to scenes of danger and death, and to the women and children, and the aged and infirm, dreading otherwise lest they should be trampled down amid the tumult! But of all whose hearts were moved by the marvellous transaction,

Joshua must have been pre-eminent. "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee." At the dividing of the sea the leadership of Moses began, and they were all baptized unto him in the cloud and in the sea. And now, in like manner, the leadership of Joshua begins at the dividing of the river, and baptism unto Joshua takes the place of baptism unto Moses. A new chapter of an illustrious history begins as its predecessor had begun, but not to be marred and rendered abortive by unbelief and disobedience like the last. How true God has been to His word! What wonders He has done among the people! What honour He has put upon Joshua! How worthy He is to be praised! Will disloyalty to Him ever occur again, will this marvellous deed be forgotten, and the miserable gods of the heathen be preferred to Jehovah? Will any future prophet have cause to say, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? For your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew, it goeth away"?

It is to be especially remarked that God took into His own hands the prescription of the method by which this great event was to be commemorated. It seems as if He could not trust the people to do it in a way that would be free from objection and from evil tendency. It was assumed that the event was worthy of special commemoration. True, indeed, there had been no special commemoration of the passage of the sea, but then the Passover was instituted so near to that event that it might serve as a memorial of it as well as of the protection of the Israelites when the firstborn of the Egyptians was slain. And generally the people had been taught, what their own hearts in some degree recognised, that great mercies should be specially com-

memorated. The Divine method of commemorating the drying up of the Jordan was a very simple one. In the first place, twelve men were selected, one from every tribe, to do the prescribed work. The democratic constitution of the nation was recognised—each tribe was to take part in it; and as it was a matter in which all were concerned, each person was to take part in the election of the representative of his tribe. Then each of these twelve representatives was to take from the bed of the river, from the place where the priests had stood with the ark, a stone, probably as large as he could carry. The twelve stones were to be carried to the place where the host lodged that night, and to be erected as a standing memorial of the miracle. It was a very simple memorial, but it was all that was needed. It was not like the proud temples or glorious pyramids of Egypt, reared as these were to give glory to man more than to God. It was like Jacob's pillar before, or Samuel's Ebenezer afterwards; void of every ornament or marking that could magnify man, and designed for one single purpose—to recall the goodness of God.

It would appear, from chap. iv. 9, that two sets of stones were set up, Joshua, following the spirit of the Divine direction, having caused a second set to be erected in the middle of the river on the spot where the priests had stood. Some have supposed that that verse is an interpolation of later date; but, as it occurs in all the manuscripts, and as it is expressly stated in the Septuagint and Vulgate versions that this was a different transaction from the other, we must accept it as such. The one memorial stood on the spot where the ark had indicated the presence of God, the other where the first encampment of the host had

shown God's faithfulness to His word. Both seemed to proclaim the great truth afterwards brought out in the exquisite words of the psalm—"God is our refuge and our strength; a very present help in time of trouble." They might not be needed so much for the generation that experienced the deliverance; but in future generations they would excite the curiosity of the children, and thus afford an opportunity to the parents to rehearse the transactions of that day, and thrill their hearts with the sense of God's mercy.

Among devout Israelites, that day was never forgotten. The crossing of the Jordan was coupled with the crossing of the sea, as the two crowning tokens of God's mercy in the history of Israel, and the most remarkable exhibitions of that Divine power which had been so often shown among them. In that wailing song, the seventy-fourth psalm, where God's wonderful works of old are contrasted in a very sad spirit with the unmitigated desolations that met the writer's eye, almost in the same breath in which he extols the miracle of the sea, "Thou didst divide the sea by Thy strength," he gives thanks for the miracle of the river, "Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood: Thou driedst up mighty rivers." And in a song, not of wailing, but of triumph, the hundred and fourteenth psalm, we have the same combination :—

"When Israel went forth out of Egypt,
The house of Jacob from a people of strange language;
Judah became His sanctuary
Israel His dominion.
The sea saw it, and fled;
Jordan was driven back.
The mountains skipped like rams,
The little hills like lambs.
What aileth thee, O thou sea, that thou fleest?
Thou Jordan, that thou turnest back?

Ye mountains, that ye skip like rams;
Ye little hills like lambs?
Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord,
At the presence of the God of Jacob;
Which turned the rock into a pool of water,
The flint into a fountain of waters."

The point of this psalm lies in the first verse—in the reference to the time "when Israel came out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language." Israel on that occasion gave a signal proof of his trust in God. At God's bidding, and with none but God to trust in, he turned his back on Egypt, and made for the wilderness. It was a delight to God to receive this mark of trust and obedience, and in recognition of it the mightiest masses and forces of nature were moved or arrested. The mountains and hills skipped like living creatures, and the sea saw it and fled. It seemed as if God could not do too much for His people. It was the same spirit that was shown when they followed Joshua to the river. They showed that they trusted God. They renounced the visible and the tangible for the invisible and the spiritual. They rose up at Joshua's command, or rather at the command of God by Joshua; and, pleased with this mark of trust, God caused the waters of the Jordan to part asunder. Surely there is something pathetic in this; the Almighty is so pleased when His children trust Him, that to serve them the strongest forces are moved about as if they were but feathers.

In many ways the truth has been exemplified in later times. When a young convert, at home or abroad, takes up decided ground for Christ, coming out from the world and becoming separate, very blessed tokens of God's nearness and of God's interest are usually given him. And Churches that at the call of Christ

surrender their worldly advantages, receive tokens of spiritual blessing that infinitely outweigh in sweetness and in spiritual value all that they lose. "Them that honour Me, I will honour."

Occurrences of more recent times show clearly that God did well in taking into His own hands the prescription of the way in which the crossing of the Jordan was to be commemorated. Tradition has it that it was at the same place where Joshua crossed that Jesus was baptized by John. That may well be doubted, for the Bethabara where John was baptizing was probably at a higher point of the river. But it is quite possible that it was at this spot that Elijah's mantle smote the river, and he and his servant passed over on dry ground. Holding that all these events occurred at the same place, tradition has called in the aid of superstition, and given a sacred character to the waters of the river at this spot. Many have seen, and every one has read of the pilgrimage to the Jordan, performed every spring, from which many hope to reap such advantage. "In the mosaics of the earliest churches at Rome and Ravenna," says Dean Stanley, "before Christian and pagan art were yet divided, the Jordan appears as a river god pouring his streams out of his urn. The first Christian emperor had always hoped to receive his long-deferred baptism in the Jordan, up to the moment when the hand of death struck him at Nicomedia. . . . Protestants, as well as Greeks and Latins, have delighted to carry off its waters for the same sacred purpose to the remotest regions of the West."

No doubt the expectation of spiritual benefit from the waters of the Jordan is one cause of the annual pilgrimage thither, and of the strange scene that

presents itself when the pilgrims are bathing. It seems impossible for man, except under the influence of the strongest spiritual views, to avoid the belief that somehow mechanical means may give rise to spiritual results. There is nothing from which he is naturally more averse than spiritual activity. Any amount of mechanical service he will often render to save him from spiritual exercise. Symbols without number he will willingly provide, if he thereby escape the necessity of going into the immediate presence of God, and worshipping Him who is a Spirit in spirit and in truth. But can mechanical service or material symbols be anything but an evil, if the would-be worshipper is thereby prevented from recognising the necessity of a heart-to-heart fellowship with the living God? Must we not be in living touch with God if the stream of Divine influence is to reach our hearts, and we are to be changed into His image? In the Psalms, which express the very essence of Hebrew devotion, spiritual contact with God is the only source of blessing. "O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where there is no water. To see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary."

Thus it was that by God's prescription the twelve plain stones taken out of the Jordan were the only memorial of the great deliverance. There was no likeness on them of the Divine Being by whom the miracle had been performed. There was nothing to encourage acts of reverence or worship directed toward the memorial. Twelve rough stones, with no sculptured figures or symbols, not even dressed by hammer and chisel, but simply as they were taken out of the river, were the

memorial. They were adapted for one purpose, and for one only: "When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up from before us, until we were gone over: that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever."

CHAPTER X.

CIRCUMCISION AND PASSOVER—MANNA AND CORN.

JOSHUA v. 1—12.

THE first two facts recorded in this chapter seem to be closely connected with each other. One is, that when all the Amorite and Canaanite kings on the west side of the Jordan heard of the miraculous drying up of the waters and the passage of the Israelites, "their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more." The other is, that the opportunity was taken then and there to circumcise the whole of the generation that had been born after leaving Egypt. But for the fact recorded in the first verse, it would have been the most unsuitable time that could be conceived for administering circumcision. The whole male population would have been rendered helpless for the time, and an invitation would have been given to the men of Jericho to commit such a massacre as in the like circumstances the sons of Jacob inflicted on the men of Shechem (Gen. xxxiv. 25). Why was not this business of circumcising performed while the host were lying inactive on the other side, and while the Jordan ran between Israel and his foes? It was because the kings of the Canaanites were petrified. It is true they plucked up courage by-and-by, and many of the kings entered into a league against Joshua. But this was after the affair of Ai, after the defeat of the Israelites

before that city had showed that, as in the case of Achilles, there was a vulnerable spot somewhere, notwithstanding the protection of their God. Meanwhile the people of Jericho were paralysed, for though the whole male population of Israel under forty lay helpless in their tents, not a finger was raised by the enemy against them.

It is with no little surprise that we read that circumcision had been suspended during the long period of the wilderness sojourn. Why was this? Some have said that, owing to the circumstances in which the people were, it would not have been convenient, perhaps hardly possible, to administer the rite on the eighth day. Moving as they were from place to place, the administration of circumcision would often have caused so much pain and peril to the child, that it is no wonder it was delayed. And once delayed, it was delayed indefinitely. But this explanation is not sufficient. There were long, very long periods of rest, during which there could have been no difficulty. A better explanation, brought forward by Calvin, leads us to connect the suspension of circumcision with the punishment of the Israelites, and with the sentence that doomed them to wander forty years in the wilderness. When the worship of the golden calf took place, the nation was rejected, and the breaking by Moses of the two tables of stone seemed an appropriate sequel to the rupture of the covenant which their idolatry had caused. And though they were soon restored, they were not restored without certain drawbacks,—tokens of the Divine displeasure. Afterwards, at the great outburst of unbelief in connection with the report of the spies, the adult generation that had come out of Egypt were doomed to perish in the wilderness, and,

with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, not one of them was permitted to enter the land of promise. Now, though it is not expressly stated, it seems probable that the suspension of circumcision was included in the punishment of their sins. They were not to be allowed to place on their children the sign and seal of a covenant which in spirit and in reality they had broken.

But it was not an abolition, but only a suspension of the sacrament for a time that took place. The time might come when it would be restored. The natural time for this would be the end of the forty years of chastisement. These forty years had now come to an end. Doubtless it would have been a great joy to Moses if it had been given him to see the restoration of circumcision, but that was not to take place until the people had set foot on Abraham's land. Now they have crossed the river. They have entered on the very land which God sware to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob to give it them. And the very first thing that is done after this is to give back to them the holy sign of the covenant, which was now administered to every man in the congregation who had not previously received it. We may well think of it as an occasion of great rejoicing. The visible token of his being one of God's children was now borne by every man and boy in the camp. In a sense they now served themselves heirs to the covenant made with their fathers, and might thus rest with firmer trust on the promise—"I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee."

Two other points in connection with this transaction demand a word of explanation. The first is the statement that "all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised" (ver. 5). If the view be

correct that the suspension of circumcision was part of the punishment for their sins, the prohibition would not come into operation for some months, at all events, after the exodus from Egypt. We think, with Calvin, that for the sake of brevity the sacred historian makes a general statement without waiting to explain the exceptions to which it was subject. The other point needing explanation is the Lord's statement after the circumcision—"This day have I rolled the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal (*i.e.*, Rolling) unto this day." How could the suspension of circumcision be called the reproach of Egypt? The words imply that, owing to the want of this sacrament, they had lain exposed to a reproach from the Egyptians, which was now rolled away. The brevity of the statement, and our ignorance of what the Egyptians were saying of the Israelites at the time, make the words difficult to understand. What seems most likely is, that when the Egyptians heard how God had all but repudiated them in the wilderness, and had withdrawn from them the sign of His covenant, they malignantly crowed over them, and denounced them as a worthless race, who had first rejected their lawful rulers in Egypt under pretext of religion, and, having shown their hypocrisy, were now scorned and cast off by the very God whom they had professed themselves so eager to serve. We may be sure that the Egyptians would not be slow to seize any pretext for denouncing the Israelites, and would be sure to make their jibes as sharp and as bitter as they could. But now the tables are turned on the Egyptians. The restoration of circumcision stamps this people once more as the people of God. The stupendous miracle just wrought in the dividing of the

Jordan indicates the kind of protection which their God and King is sure to extend to them. The name of Gilgal will be a perpetual testimony that the reproach of Egypt is rolled away.

Circumcision being now duly performed, the way was prepared for another holy rite for which the appointed season had arrived—the Passover. Some have supposed that the Passover as well as circumcision was suspended after the sentence of the forty years' wandering, the more especially that it was expressly enacted that no uncircumcised person was to eat the Passover. We know (Num. ix. 5) that the Passover was kept the second year after they left Egypt, but no other reference to it occurs in the history. On this, as on many other points connected with the wilderness history, we must be content to remain in ignorance. We are not even very sure how far the ordinary sacrifices were offered during that period. It is quite possible that the considerations that suspended the rite of circumcision applied to other ordinances. But whether or not the Passover was observed in the wilderness, we may easily understand that after being circumcised the people would observe it with a much happier and more satisfied feeling. There were many things to make this Passover memorable. The crossing of the Jordan was so like the crossing of the Red Sea that the celebration in Egypt could not fail to come back vividly to all the older people,—those that were under twenty at the exodus, to whom the sentence of exclusion from Canaan did not apply (Num. xiv. 29). Many of these must have looked on while their fathers sprinkled the lintels and door posts with the blood of the lamb, and must have listened to the awful death-cry of the firstborn of the Egyptians. They must have remembered well

that memorable midnight when all were in such excitement marching away from Egypt; and not less vividly must they have remembered the terror that seized them when the Egyptian host was seen in pursuit; and then again the thrill of triumph with which they passed between the crystal walls, under the glow of the fiery pillar; and once more the triumphant notes of Miriam's timbrel and the voices of the women, "Sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider He hath cast into the sea." And now these days of glory were coming back! As surely as the passage of the sea had been followed by the destruction of the Egyptians, so surely would the passage of the Jordan be followed by the destruction of the Canaanites. Glorious things were spoken of the city of their God. The benediction of Moses was about to receive a new fulfilment—"Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places."

The remembrance of the past is often an excellent preparation for the trials of the future, and as often it proves a remarkable support under them. It was the very nature of the Passover to look back to the past, and to recall God's first great interposition on behalf of His people. It was a precious encouragement both to faith and hope. So also is our Christian Passover. It is a connecting link between the first and second comings of our Lord. The first coming lends support to faith, the second to hope. No exercise of soul can be more profitable than to go back to that memorable day when Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us. For then the price of redemption was paid in full, and

the door of salvation flung wide open. Then the Son sealed His love by giving Himself to the cross for us. What blessing, whether for this life or the life to come, was not purchased by that transaction? Life may be dark and stormy, but hope foresees a bright to-morrow. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."

Yet another incident is connected with this transition period of the history. "They did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day. And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year." It is not necessary to suppose that they did not partake at all of the fruits of the land till the morning after that Passover. The conquest of Sihon and Og must have put a large share of produce in their hands, and we can hardly suppose that they did not make some use of it. The narrative is so brief that it does not undertake to state every modification that may be applicable to its general statements. The main thing to be noticed is, that while the manna continued to descend, it was the staple article of food; but when the manna was withdrawn, the old corn and other fruits of the country took its place. In other words, the miracle was not continued when it ceased to be necessary. The manna had been a provision for the wilderness, where ordinary food in sufficient quantity could not be obtained; but now that they were in a land of fields and orchards and vineyards the manna was withdrawn.

We have already adverted to the Bible law of the supernatural. No sanction is given to the idea of a

lavish and needless expenditure of supernatural power. A law of economy, we might almost say parsimony, prevails, side by side with the exercise of unbounded liberality. Jesus multiplies the loaves and fishes to feed the multitude, but He will not let one fragment be lost that remains after the feast. A similar law guides the economy of prayer. We have no right to ask that mercies may come to us through extraordinary channels, when it is in our power to get them by ordinary means. If it is in our power to procure bread by our labour, we dare not ask it to be sent direct. We are only too prone to make prayer at the eleventh hour an excuse for want of diligence or want of courage in what bears on the prosperity of the spiritual life. It may be that of His great generosity God sometimes blesses us, even though we have made a very inadequate use of the ordinary means. But on that we have no right to presume. We are fond of short and easy methods where the natural method would be long and laborious. But here certainly we find the working of natural law in the spiritual world. We cannot look for God's blessing without diligent use of God's appointed means.

More generally, this occurrence in the history of Israel, the cessation of one provision when another comes into operation, exemplifies a great law in providence by which the loss of one kind of advantage is compensated by the advent of another. In childhood and early youth we depend for our growth in knowledge on the instructions of our teachers. What puzzles us we refer to them, and they guide us through the difficulty. If they are wise teachers they will not tell us everything, but they will put us on the right method to find out. Still they are there as a court of appeal, so to speak, and we have always the satisfaction of a

last resort. But the time comes when we bid farewell to teachers. Happily it is the time when the judgment becomes self-reliant, independent, penetrating. We are thrown mainly upon our own resources. And the very fact of our having to depend on our own judgment fosters and promotes independence, and fits us better for the responsibilities of life. When we become men we put away childish things. A habit of leaning on others keeps us children; but grappling with difficulties as we find them, and trying to make our way through them and over them, promotes manliness. The manna ceases, and we eat the fruit of the land.

So in family life. The affection that binds parents and children, brothers and sisters to one another in the family is both beautiful and delightful; and it were no wonder if, on the part of some, there were the desire that their intercourse should suffer no rude break, but go on unchanged for an indefinite time. But it is seldom God's will that family life shall remain unbroken. Often the interruption comes in the rudest and most terrible form—by the death of the head of the house. And the circumstances of the family may require that all who are capable of earning anything shall turn out to increase the family store. It is often a painful and distressing change. But at least it wakens up all who can do anything, it rescues them from the temptation of a slumbering, aimless life, and often draws out useful gifts that turn their lives into a real blessing. And there are other compensations. When Sarah died, Isaac was left with an empty heart; but when Rebecca came to him, he was comforted. The precise blank that death leaves may never be wholly filled, but the heart expands in other directions, and with new objects of affection the

gnawing void ceases to be acutely felt. As old attachments are snapped, new are gradually formed. And even in old age a law of compensation often comes in; children and children's children bring new interests and pleasures, and the green hues of youth modify the grey of age.

Then there is the happy experience by which the advent of spiritual blessings compensates the loss of temporal. Nothing at first appears more desolate than loss of fortune, loss of health, or loss of some principal bodily sense—like sight or hearing. But in a Milton intellectual vigour, patriotic ardour, and poetic sensibility attain their noblest elevation, though

> "Cloud and ever-during dark
> Surrounds me, from the cheerful ways of men
> Cut off, and, for the book of knowledge fair,
> Presented with a universal blank
> Of nature's works, to me expunged and rased,
> And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out."

It is the total loss of hearing, the result of a sudden accident, that turns the slater, John Kitto, into a most instructive and interesting Oriental scholar and writer. How often temporal loss has proved in a higher sense spiritual gain, all Christian biography testifies. Such instances are not uncommon as that which the Rev. Charles Simeon gives, in speaking of some blind men from Edinburgh whom nearly a century ago he found at work in a country house in Scotland: "One of the blind men, on being interrogated with respect to his knowledge of spiritual things, answered, 'I never saw till I was blind; nor did I ever know contentment while I had my eyesight, as I do now that I have lost it; I can truly affirm, though few know how to credit me, that I would on no account change my

present situation and circumstances with any that I ever enjoyed before I was blind.' He had enjoyed eyesight till twenty-five, and had been blind now about three years." [1]

Lastly, of all exchanges in room of old provisions the most striking is that which our Lord thus set forth: "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you." If we should think of life, even the Christian life, as a mere time of enjoyment, albeit spiritual enjoyment, no statement could be more paradoxical or unpalatable. It is because life is a training school, and because what we most need in that school is the immediate action of the Divine Spirit on our spirits, purifying, elevating, strengthening, guiding all that is deepest in our nature, that our Lord's words are true. Very precious had been the manna that ceased when Jesus left. But more nourishing is the new corn with which the Spirit feeds us. Let us prize it greatly so long as we are in the flesh. We shall know the good of it when we enter on the next stage of our being. Then, in the fullest sense, the manna will cease, and we shall eat the corn of the land.

[1] "Life of Rev. Charles Simeon," p. 125.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CAPTAIN OF THE LORD'S HOST.

JOSHUA v. 13—15, vi. 1.

THE process of circumcision is over, and the men are well; the feast of unleavened bread has come to an end; all honour has been paid to these sacred ordinances according to the appointment of God; the manna has ceased, and the people are now depending on the corn of the land, of which, in all probability, they have but a limited supply. Everything points to the necessity of further action, but it is hard to say what the next step is to be. Naturally it would be the capture of Jericho. But this appears a Quixotic enterprise. The city is surrounded by a wall, and its gates are "straitly shut up," barred, and closely guarded to prevent the entrance of a single Israelite. Joshua himself is at a loss. No Divine communication has yet come to him, like that which came as to the crossing of the Jordan. See him walking all alone "by Jericho," as near the city as it is safe for him to go. With mind absorbed in thought and eyes fixed on the ground, he is pondering the situation, but unable to get light upon it, when something comes athwart his sphere of vision. He lifts his eyes, and right against him perceives a soldier, brandishing his sword.

A less courageous man would have been startled,

perhaps frightened. His first thought is, that it is an enemy. None of his own soldiers would have ventured there without his orders, or would have dared to take up such an attitude towards his commander-in-chief. With a soldier's presence of mind, instead of moving off, he assumes an aggressive attitude, challenges this warrior, and demands whether he is friend or foe. If friend, he must explain his presence; if foe, prepare for battle. Joshua is himself a thorough soldier, and will allow no one to occupy an ambiguous position. "And Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?"

If the appearance of the soldier was a surprise, his answer to the question must have been a greater. "Nay; but as Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." The "nay" deprecates his being either friend or foe in the common sense, but especially his being foe. His position and his office are far more exalted. As Captain of the host of the Lord, he is at the head, not of human armies, but of all the principalities and powers of heavenly places,—

> "The mighty regencies
> Of seraphim, and potentates and thrones."

And now the real situation flashes on Joshua. This soldier is no other than the Angel of the Covenant, the same who came to Abraham under the oak at Mamre, and that wrestled with Jacob on the banks of this very Jordan at Peniel. Joshua could not but remember, when God threatened to withdraw from Israel after the sin of the golden calf, and send some created angel to guide them through the wilderness, how earnestly Moses remonstrated, and how his whole soul was thrown into the pleading—"If Thy presence go not with us, carry me not up hence." He could

not but remember the intense joy of Moses when this pleading proved successful—"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." There could be little doubt in his mind who this "Captain of the host of Jehovah" was, and no hesitation on his part in yielding to Him the Divine honour due to the Most High. And then he must have felt warmly how very kind and seasonable this appearance was, just at the very moment when he was in so great perplexity, and when his path was utterly dark. It was a new proof that man's extremity is God's opportunity. It was just like what used to happen afterwards, when "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us," and was so promptly at hand for His disciples in all times of their tribulation. It was an anticipation of the scene when the ship was tossed so violently on the waves, and Jesus appeared with His "Peace, be still." Or, on that dreary morning, soon after the crucifixion, after they had spent the whole night on the lake and caught nothing, when Jesus came and brought the miraculous draught of fishes to their nets. It is the truth with which all His suffering and stricken children have been made so familiar in all ages of the Church's history :—that, however He may seem to hide Himself and stand afar off in times of trouble, He is in reality ever near, and can never forget that last assurance to His faithful people—"Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world."

It is not likely that Joshua found any cause to discuss the question that modern criticism has so earnestly handled, whether this being that now appeared in human form really was Jehovah. And as little does it seem necessary for us to discuss it. There seems no good reason to reject the view that these theophanies, though not incarnations, were yet foreshadows of the

incarnation,—hints of the mystery afterwards to be realized when Jesus was born of Mary. If these appearances looked like incarnations, it was incarnation after the pagan, not the Christian type; momentary alliances of the Divine being with the human form or appearance, assumed merely for the occasion, and capable of being thrown aside as rapidly as they were assumed. This might do very well to foreshadow the incarnation, but it fell a long way short of the incarnation itself. The Christian incarnation was after a type never dreamt of by the pagan mind. That the Son of God should be born of a woman, His body formed in the womb by the slow but wonderful process which "fashioned all His members in continuance, when as yet there was none of them" (Psalm cxxxix. 16), and that He should thus stand in relations to His fellow-men that could not be obliterated, was very wonderful; but most wonderful of all that the manhood once assumed could never be thrown off, but that the Son of God must continue to be the Son of man, in two distinct natures and one person for ever. The fact that all this has taken place is well fitted to give us unshaken confidence in the love and sympathy of our Elder Brother. For He is as really our Brother as He ever was in the days of His flesh, and as full of the care and thoughtful interest that the kindest of elder brothers takes in the sorrows and struggles of his younger brethren.

It has often been remarked as an instructive circumstance, that now, as on other occasions, the Angel of the Lord appeared in the character most adapted to the circumstances of His people. He appeared as a soldier with a drawn sword in His hand. A long course of fighting lay before the Israelites ere they could get

possession of their land, and the sword in the hand of the Angel was an assurance that He would fight with them and for them. It was also a clear intimation that in the judgment of God, it was necessary to use the sword. But it was not the sword of the ambitious warrior who falls upon men simply because they are in his way, or because he covets their territories for his country. It was the judicial sword, demanding the death of men who had been tried for their sins, long warned, and at last judicially condemned. The iniquity of the Amorites was now full. We know what kind the people were who dwelt near Jericho four or five hundred years before, while the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah stood in the plain, cities that even then were reeking with the foulest corruption. It is true the judgment of God came down on these cities, but bare judgments have never reformed the world. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah removed the foulest stain-spot for the time, but it did not change the hearts nor the habits of the nations. It has seemed good to the Spirit of God to give us one glimpse of the foulness that had been reached at that early period, but not to multiply the filthy details at a future time,—after the long interval between Abraham and Joshua. But we know that if Sodom was bad, Jericho was no better. The country as a whole, which had now filled up its cup of iniquity, was no better. No wonder that the Angel bore a drawn sword in His hand. The long-suffering of the righteous God was exhausted, and Joshua and his people were the instruments by whom the judicial punishment was to be inflicted. The Captain of the Lord's host had drawn His sword from its scabbard to show that the judgment of that wicked people was to slumber no more.

It was not in this spirit nor in this attitude that the Angel of the Covenant had met with Jacob, centuries before, a little higher up the river, at the confluence of the Jabbok. Yet there was not a little that was similar in the two meetings. Like Joshua now, Jacob was then about to enter the land of promise. Like him, he was confronted by an enemy in possession, who, in Jacob's case, was bent on avenging the wrong of his youth. How that enemy was to be overcome Jacob knew not, just as Joshua knew not how Jericho was to be taken. But there was this difference between the two, that in Jacob's case the Angel dealt with him as an opponent; in Joshua's He avowed Himself a friend. The difference was no doubt due to the different dispositions of the two men. Jacob does not seem to have felt that it was only in God's name, and in God's strength, and under God's protection that he could enter Canaan; he appears to have been trusting too much to his own devices,—especially to the munificent present which he had forwarded to his brother. He must be taught the lesson "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord." At first Jacob dealt with his opponent simply as an obstructionist; then he discovered His Divine rank, and immediately he became the aggressor, and, spite of his dislocated thigh, held on to his opponent, declaring that he would not let Him go except He blessed him. It is otherwise with Joshua. He has no personal matter to settle with God before he is ready to advance into the land. He is in perplexity, and the Angel comes to relieve him. It is neither for reproof nor correction but simply for blessing that He is there.

The appearance of the Angel denoted a special method of communication with Joshua. We have already remarked that we do not know in what manner God's

communications to His servant were made before. This incident shows that the ordinary method was not that of personal intercourse,—probably it was that of impressions made supernaturally on Joshua's mind. Why, then, is the method changed now? Why does this Warrior-angel present Himself in person? Probably because the way in which Jericho was to be taken was so extraordinary that, to encourage the faith of Joshua and the people, a special mode of announcement had to be used. One might have thought this unnecessary after the display of Divine power at the crossing of the Jordan. But steadiness of faith was no characteristic of the Israelites, and such as it was it was as liable to fail after crossing the Jordan as it had been after crossing the sea. Special means were taken to invigorate it and fit it for the coming strain. It was one of those rare occasions when a personal visit from the Angel of the Covenant was desirable. Something visible and tangible was needed, something which might be spoken of and readily understood by the people, and which could not possibly be gainsayed.

The moment that Joshua understood with whom he was conversing, he fell on his face, and offered to his visitor not only obeisance but worship, which the visitor did not decline. And then came a question indicating profound regard for his Lord's will, and readiness to do whatsoever he might be told—"What saith my Lord unto His servant?" It cannot but remind us of the question put by Saul to the Lord while yet lying on the ground on the way to Damascus—"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Joshua compares favourably with Moses at the burning bush, not only now, but throughout the whole interview. No word of remonstrance does he utter, no token of unwillingness

or unbelief does he show. And it cannot be said that the instructions which the Angel gave him respecting the taking of Jericho were of a kind to be easily accepted. The course to be followed seemed to human wisdom the very essence of silliness. To all appearance there was not a vestige of adaptation of means to the end. Yet so admirable is the temper of Joshua, that he receives all with absolute and perfect submission. The question "What saith my Lord unto His servant?" is very far from mere matter of courtesy. It is a first principle with Joshua that when the mind of God is once indicated there is nothing for him but to obey. What is he that he should dare to criticise the plans of omnipotence? that he should propose to correct and improve the methods of Divine wisdom? Anything of the kind was alike preposterous and irreverent. "Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, and whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and with him also who is of a humble and contrite spirit, and who trembleth at My word."

The first answer to the question "What saith my Lord unto His servant?" is somewhat remarkable. "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy." Rationalists have explained this as meaning that this was an ancient shrine of the Canaanites, and therefore a place holy in the eyes of Israel; but such an idea needs no refutation. Others conceive it to mean that Joshua, having crossed the Jordan, had now set foot on the land promised to the fathers, and that the soil for that reason was called holy. But if that was the reason for his putting off

his shoes, it is difficult to see how he could ever have been justified in again putting them on. And when God called to Moses out of the bush and bade him do the very same thing, it surely was not because the peninsula of Sinai was holy; it was because Moses stood in the immediate presence of the holy God. And it is simply to remind Joshua of the Divine presence that this command is given; and being given it is no sooner uttered than obeyed.

And then follow God's instructions for the taking of Jericho. Never was such a method propounded to reasonable man, or one more open to the objections and exceptions of worldly wisdom. No arrangement of his forces could have been more open to objection than that which God required of him. He was to march round Jericho once a day for six successive days, and seven times on the seventh day, the priests carrying the ark and blowing with trumpets, the men of war going before, and others following the ark, making a long narrow line round the place. We know that the city was provided with gates, like other fortified cities. What was there to prevent the men of Jericho from sallying out at each of the gates, breaking up the line of Israel into sections, separating them from each other, and inflicting dreadful slaughter on each? Such a march round the city seems to be the very way to invite a murderous attack. But it is the Divine command. And this process of surrounding the city is to be carried on in absolute silence on the part of the people, with no noise save the sounding of trumpets until a signal is given; then a great shout is to be raised, and the walls of Jericho are to fall down flat on the ground. Who would have thought it strange if Joshua had been somewhat staggered by so singular

directions, and if, like Moses at the bush, he had suggested all manner of objections, and shown the greatest unwillingness to undertake the operation? The noble quality of his faith is shown in his raising no objection at all. After God has thus answered his question, "What saith my Lord unto His servant?" he is just as docile and submissive as he was before. True faith is blind to everything except the Divine command. When God has given him his orders, he simply communicates them to the priests and to the people. He leaves the further development of the plan in God's hands, assured that He will not leave His purpose unfulfilled.

Nor do the priests or the people appear to have made any objection on their part. The plan no doubt exposed them to two things which men do not like, ridicule and danger. Possibly the ridicule was as hard to bear as the danger. God would protect them from the danger, but who would shield them from the ridicule? Even if at the end of the seven days, the promised result should take place, would it not be hard to make themselves for a whole week the sport of the men of Jericho, who would ask all that time whether they had lost their senses, whether they imagined that they would terrify them into surrender by the sound of their rams' horns? How often, especially in the case of young persons, do we find this dread of ridicule the greatest obstacle to Christian loyalty? And even where they have the strongest conviction that ere long the laugh, if laughter may be spoken of in the case, will be turned against their tormentors, and that it will be clearly seen who the men are whom the King delighteth to honour, what misery is caused for the time by ridicule, and how often do the young prove

traitors to Christ rather than endure it? All the more remarkable is the steadiness of the priests and people on this occasion. We cannot think that this was due simply and solely to their loyalty to the leader to whom they had recently sworn allegiance. We cannot but believe that personal faith animated many of them, the same faith as that of Joshua himself. Their wilderness training and trials had not been in vain; the manifest interposition of God in the defeat of Sihon and Og had sunk into their hearts; the miraculous passage of the river had brought God very near to them; and it was doubtless in a large measure their conviction that He who had begun the work of conquest for them would carry it on to the end, that procured for Joshua's announcement the unanimous acquiescence and hearty support alike of priests and people.

And hence, too, the reason why, in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, the falling down of the walls of Jericho is specially accounted for as the result of faith: "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days" (ver. 30). The act of faith lay in the conviction that God, who had prescribed the method of attack, foolish though it seemed, would infallibly bring it to a successful issue. It was not merely Joshua's faith, but the priests' faith, and the people's faith, that shone in the transaction. Faith repelled the idea that the enemy would sally forth and break their ranks; it triumphed over the scorn and ridicule which would certainly be poured on them; it knew that God had given the directions, and it was convinced that He would bring all to a triumphant issue. Never had the spiritual thermometer risen so high in Israel, and seldom did it rise so high at any future period of their history. That singular week,

spent in marching round Jericho again and again and again, was one of the most remarkable ever known; the people were near heaven, and the grace and peace of heaven seem to have rested on their hearts.

We sometimes speak of "ages of faith." There have been times when the disposition to believe in the unseen, in the presence and power of God, and in the certain success at last of all that is done in obedience to His will, has dominated whole communities, and led to a wonderful measure of holy obedience. Such a period was this age of Joshua. We cannot say, thinking of ourselves, that the present is an age of faith. Rather, on the part of the masses, it is an age when the secular, the visible, the present lords it over men's minds. Yet we are not left without splendid examples of faith. The missionary enterprise that contemplates the conquest of the whole world for Christ, because God has given to His Messiah the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost part of the earth for His possession, and that looks forward to the day when this promise shall be fulfilled to the letter, is a fruit of faith. And the ready surrender of so many young lives for the world's evangelization, as missionaries, and teachers, and medical men and women, is a crowning proof that faith is not dead among us. Would only it were a faith that pervaded the whole community,—princes, priests, and people alike; and that there were a harmony among us in the attack on the strongholds of sin and Satan as great as there was in the host of Israel when the people, one in heart and one in hope, marched out, day after day, round the walls of Jericho!

CHAPTER XII.

THE FATE OF JERICHO.

JOSHUA vi. 8—27.

THE instructions of Joshua to the priests and the people are promptly obeyed. In the bright rays of the morning sun, on the day when Jericho is to be surrounded, the plain between the Jordan and Jericho, a space of some five miles, may be seen dotted over with the tents of Israel, arranged in that orderly manner which had been prescribed by Moses in the wilderness. The whole encampment is astir in the prospect of great events. The erect carriage, the flashing eye, the compressed lip of the soldiers show that something great and unusual is expected. By-and-by, there is a stir near the spot where the ark rests, and, borne on the shoulders of the priests, the sacred vessel is seen in motion in the direction of Jericho. Right in front of it are seven priests carrying trumpets of rams' horns, or, as some render it, jubilee horns. The procession of the ark halts a little, till a body of armed men advance and form in front of it. Others of the people take up their places in the rear. The seven priests sound their trumpets, and the procession moves on. Their course is round the walls of Jericho, far enough removed to be beyond the reach of the arrows of its defenders. Not a shout is raised. Not a sound is heard, save that of the trumpets of the seven priests.

At last the procession returns to the camp, leaving Jericho just as it found it. Next day the same process is repeated; and the next, and the next, on to the sixth. On the seventh day, the march begins early and is continued late. The spirits of the people are sustained during their weary, monotonous tramp by the expectation of a crisis. At length, when the seventh circuit has been made, the signal is given by Joshua. The air is rent with the shouts of the people and the noise of the trumpets, and immediately, all round, the wall falls flat to the ground, and the people march straight into the city. Paralysed with astonishment and terror, the inhabitants are unable to resist, and lie, men, women and children, at the mercy of their assailants. And the instructions to the Israelites are to destroy everything that is in the city, both man and woman, young and old, ox and sheep and ass, with the edge of the sword. As for the more solid part of the spoil, the silver and the gold and the vessels of brass and iron, they are "devoted" to the service of God (the Authorized translation unhappily uses the word "accursed"). No one is to appropriate a single article to his own use. An exception to the universal massacre was to take place only in the case of the harlot Rahab, who was to be saved, with all her relations, in accordance with the solemn promise of the spies.

There is no difficulty in perceiving the great lesson for all time to be derived from this extraordinary transaction, or the great law of the kingdom of God that was made so conspicuous by it. When we have clear indications of the Divine mind as to any course of action, we are to advance to it promptly and without fear, even though the means at our disposal appear

utterly inadequate to the object sought to be gained. No man goeth a warfare at his own charges in the service of God. The resources of infinite power avail for that service, and they are sure to be brought into play if it be undertaken for God's glory, and in accordance with His will. Who could have supposed that the fishermen of Galilee would in the end triumph over all the might of kings and rulers; over all the influence of priesthoods and systems of worship enshrined in the traditions of centuries; over all the learning and intellect of the philosopher, and over all the prejudices and passions of the multitude? The secret lay manifestly in the promise of Jesus—"Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." Who could have thought that the efforts of a poor German student in Berlin, on behalf of some neglected children, would expand into the widespread and well-rooted "Inner Mission" of Wichern? Or that the concern of a prison chaplain for the welfare of some of the prisoners after their release would develop into the worldwide work of Fliedner? Or that the distress of a kind-hearted medical student in London for a batch of poor boys who "didn't live nowhere," and whose pale faces, as they lay on a cold night on the roof of a shed, stirred in him an irrepressible compassion, would give birth to one of the marvels of London philanthropy,—Dr. Barnardo's twenty institutions, caring for three to four thousand children, in connection with which the announcement could be made that no really destitute child was ever turned from its doors? When Carey on his shoemaker's stool contemplated the evangelization of India, there was as great a gulf between the end and the apparent means, as when the priests blew with their rams' horns round the walls of Jericho.

But Carey felt it to be a Divine command, and Joshua-like set himself to obey it, leaving to God from whom it came to furnish the power by which the work was to be done. And wherever there have been found men and women of strong faith in God, who have looked on His will as recorded in the Scriptures with as much reverence as if it had been announced personally to themselves, and who have set themselves to obey that will with a sense of its reality, and a faith in God's promised help, like that of Joshua as the priests marched round Jericho, the same result has been realized; before Zerubbabel the great mountain has become a plain, and success has been achieved worthy of the acknowledgment—"The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

Far more effectual has this brave and thorough method of doing the Divine will proved than all the contrivances of compromise and worldly wisdom. The attempt to serve two masters has never proved either dignified or permanently successful. "If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him;" but do not attempt to combine in one what will please God and Baal too. It is the single eye that is full of light, and full of blessing. If God really is our Master, all the resources of heaven and earth are at our back. If we are able to go forward in sole and simple reliance on His might, as David did in the conflict with Goliath, all will go well. If we waver in our trust in Him, if we fly to the resources of human policy, if we seek deliverance from present evil at whatever cost, we arrest, as it were, the electric current flowing from heaven, and become weak as other men. Still more if we are guilty of deceit and cunning. How different was David confronting Goliath, and

David feigning madness before King Achish! In the one case a noble hero, in the other a timid, faltering child. It is a dear price we pay for present safety or convenience when we forfeit the approval of our conscience and the favour of God. It is a sublime attitude that faith takes up even in the face of overwhelming danger—"Lord, it is nothing with Thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, Thou art our God; let not man prevail AGAINST THEE" (2 Chron. xiv. 11).

This, however, is but one half the lesson of the siege of Jericho. The other and not less valuable lesson is, that in many good enterprises, all that is done may appear for a long time to be labour lost, and not to advance us by one step nearer to the object in view. For six days the priests carried the ark round Jericho, but not one stone was loosened from the walls, not by one iota did the defences seem to yield. Six times on the seventh day there was an equally complete want of result. Nay, the seventh perambulation on the seventh day appeared to be equally unsuccessful, until the very last moment; but when that moment came, the whole defences of the city came tumbling to the ground. It is often God's method to do a great deal of work unseen, and then on a sudden effect the consummation. And whenever we are working in accordance with God's will, it is our encouragement to believe that though our visible success is hardly appreciable, yet good and real work is done. For one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. Sometimes in a thousand years God does not seem to accomplish a good day's

work, but at other times in a single day He does the work of a thousand years. The reformation of the Church in the Middle Ages,—how little progress it seemed to make during weary centuries; and even when victory seemed to be drawing nigh, how thoroughly was it arrested by the martyrdom of Huss and Jerome in Bohemia, the extinction of the light of Wicliffe in England, and the suppression of the Lollards in Scotland! And when in Providence some causes began to operate that seemed to have a bearing on the desired consummation, such as the invention of printing, the revival of learning, and the love of freedom, how feebly they seemed to operate in opposition to that overwhelming force which the Papacy had been accumulating for centuries, and which nothing seemed able to touch! But when Luther appeared, nailed his theses to the door of the church at Wittemberg, and took up the bold attitude of an out-and-out opponent to Rome, in one hour the Church was struck as with an earthquake; it reeled to its foundations, and half of the proud structure fell. The conflict with American slavery, how slowly it advanced for many a year, nay, at times it seemed to be even losing ground; till in the midst of the great Civil War the President signed a certain proclamation, and in one moment American slavery received its death blow. An eminent historian of England has a striking picture of the slow, steady, awful triumph of iniquity in the career of Cardinal Wolsey, and the sudden collapse of the structure built up so carefully by that wicked man. Speaking of the final retribution, he says: "The time of reckoning at length was arrived. Slowly the hand had crawled along the dial plate, slowly as if the event would never come, and wrong was heaped on wrong,

and oppression cried, and it seemed as if no ear had heard its voice, till the measure of the wickedness was at length fulfilled; the finger touched the hour, and as the strokes of the great hammer rang out above the nation, in an instant the mighty fabric of iniquity was shivered to ruins."

It is the prerogative of faith to believe that the same law of Providence is ever in operation, and that the rapidity with which some great drama is to be wound up may be as striking as the slowness of its movement was trying in its earlier stages. May we not be living in an age destined to furnish another great example of this law? The years as they pass seem laden with great events, and we seem to hear the angel that hath power over fire calling to the angel with the sharp sickle,—"Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for the grapes thereof are fully ripe." We cannot tell but before a year ends some grand purpose of Providence shall be accomplished, the death blow given to some system of force or of fraud that has scourged the earth for centuries, or some great prophetic cycle completed for which Simeons and Annas have been watching more than they that watch for the morning. God hasten the day when on every side truth shall finally triumph over error, good over evil, peace over strife, love over selfishness, and order over confusion; and when from every section of God's great but scattered family the shout of triumph shall go up, "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

But let us return to the narrative of the fall of Jericho, and advert to two of the difficulties that have occurred to many minds in connection with it; one of comparatively little moment, but another of far more serious import.

The lesser difficulty is connected with the order to march round Jericho for seven successive days. Was it not contrary to the spirit of the law to make no difference on the Sabbath? As the narrative reads we are led to think that the Sabbath was the last of the seven days, in which case, instead of a cessation of labour, there was an increase of it sevenfold. Possibly this may be a mistake; but at the least it seems as if, all days being treated alike, there was a neglect of the precept, "In it thou shalt not do any work."

To this it has usually been replied that the law of the Sabbath being only a matter of arrangement, and not founded on any unchangeable obligation, it was quite competent for God to suspend it or for a time repeal it, if occasion required. The present instance has been viewed as one of those exceptional occasions when the obligation to do no work was suspended for a time. But this is hardly a satisfactory explanation. Was it likely that immediately after God had so solemnly charged Joshua respecting the book of the law, that it was "not to depart out of his mouth, but he was to meditate therein day and night, to observe to do according to all that was written therein," that almost on the first occurrence of a public national interest He would direct him to disregard the law of the Sabbath? Or was it likely that now that the people were about to get possession of the land, under the most sacred obligation to frame both their national and their personal life by the Divine law, one of the most outstanding requirements of that law should be even temporarily superseded? We cannot help thinking that it is in another direction that we must look for the solution of this difficulty.

And what seems the just explanation is, that this

solemn procession of the ark was really an act of worship, a very public and solemn act of worship, and that therefore the labour which it involved was altogether justifiable, just as the Sabbath labour involved in the offering of the daily sacrifices could not be objected to. It was a very solemn and open demonstration of honour to that great Being in whom Israel trusted—of obedience to His word, and unfaltering confidence that He would show Himself the God of His chosen people. At every step of their march they might well have sung—"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." The absurdity of their proceeding to the eye of flesh invested it with a high sanctity, because it testified to a conviction that the presence of that God who dwelt symbolically in the ark would more than compensate for all the feebleness and even apparent silliness of the plan. It was indeed an exception to the usual way of keeping the Sabbath, but an exception that maintained and exalted the honour of God. And, in a sense, it might be called resting, inasmuch as no aggressive operations of any kind were carried on; it was simply a waiting on God, waiting till He should arise out of His place, and cause it to be seen that "Israel got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but Thy right hand, and Thine arm, and the light of Thy countenance, because Thou hadst a favour unto them" (Psalm xliv. 3).

A more serious objection in the eyes of many is that which is founded on the promiscuous massacre of the people of Jericho, which, according to the narrative, the Israelites were ordered to make. And it is not wonderful that, with the remarkable sense of the sanctity of human life attained in our country and in our age,

and the intense horror which we have at scenes of blood and death, the idea of this slaughter should excite a strong feeling of repugnance. For in truth human life has never been held so sacred among men as it is in these our days and in this our island, where by the mercy of God war and bloodshed have been unknown for nearly a century and a half. We must remember that three thousand years ago, and in the tumultuous regions of the East, such a sentiment was unknown. The massacre of one tribe by another was an event of frequent occurrence, and so little thought of that a year or two after its occurrence the survivors of the massacre might be found on perfectly good terms with those who had committed it. This of course does not affect the righteousness of the sentence executed on the men of Jericho, but it shows that as executioners of that sentence the Israelites were not exposed either to the harrowing or the hardening influence which would now be inseparable from such a work.

We reserve the general question for consideration further on.[1] We confine ourselves for the present to the inquiry, Why was Jericho singled out for treatment so specially severe? Not only were all its inhabitants put to the sword, as indeed the inhabitants of other cities were too, but the city was burnt with fire, and a special curse was pronounced upon any one that should set up its gates and its walls. Of only two other cities do we read that they were destroyed in this way—Ai and Hazor (viii. 28, xi. 13). And in regard to all the three we may see special considerations dictating Joshua's course. Jericho and Ai were the first two cities taken by him, and it may have been

[1] See Chapter XXXI., "Jehovah the Champion of Israel."

useful to set an example of severity in their case. Hazor was the centre of a conspiracy, and being situated in the extreme north, its fate might read a lesson to those who were too far from Jericho and Ai to see what had happened there. But in the case of Jericho there was another consideration. Gilgal, which Joshua had made his headquarters, was but three or four miles distant. At that place there were no doubt gathered a great part of the flocks and herds of the Israelites, with the women and children, as well as the ark and the sacred tabernacle. It was necessary to prevent the possibility of a fortress being again erected at Jericho. For if it should fall into the enemy's hands, it would endanger the very existence of Gilgal. We shall see in the after part of the narrative that the policy of sparing the towns even when the inhabitants were destroyed proved a mistake, and was very disastrous to the Israelites. We shall find that in very many cases, while Joshua was occupied elsewhere, the towns were taken possession of anew by the Canaanites, and new troubles befell the Israelites. For Joshua's conquest was not a complete subjugation, and much remained to be done by each tribe in its settlement in order to get quit of the old inhabitants. It was the failure of most of the tribes to do their part in this process that led to most of the troubles in the future history of Israel, both in the way of temptation to idolatry and in the form of actual war.

The only things saved from utter destruction at Jericho were the gold and the silver and other metallic substances, which were put into the treasury of the house of the Lord. The fact that the "house of the Lord," situated at this time at Gilgal, was an establishment of such size as to be able to employ all these things

in its service refutes the assertion of those critics who would make out that at the settlement in Canaan there was no place that might be called emphatically "*the* house of the Lord." It indicates that the arrangements for worship were on a large scale,—a fact which is confirmed afterwards by the circumstance that the Gibeonites were assigned by Joshua to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water *for the house of my God.*" If little is said about the arrangements for worship in the Book of Joshua, it is because the one object of the book is to record the settlement of the nation in the country. If it were true that the book was overhauled by some priestly writer who took every opportunity of magnifying his office, he must have done his work in a strange manner. We find in it such hints as we have noticed showing that the service of the sanctuary was not neglected, but we have none of those full or formal details that would have been given if a writer with such a purpose had worked over the book.

We hear of Jericho from time to time as a place of abode both in the Old Testament and in the New; but when Hiel the Bethelite rebuilt it with walls and gates, "he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord, which He spake by Joshua the son of Nun" (1 Kings xvi. 34). It was ordained that that first fortress which had withstood the people of God on the west of Jordan should remain a perpetual desolation. As the stones set up in the channel and on the banks of the river witnessed to future generations of God's care for His own people, so the stones of Jericho cast down and lying in ruined heaps were designed to testify to the dread retribution that overtook the guilty. The two great lessons of

Providence from Jericho are, the certainty of the reward of faith and obedience on the one hand, and of the punishment of wickedness on the other. The words which Balaam had proclaimed from the top of the mountain on the other side now received their first fulfilment :—

> "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob,
> Thy tabernacles, O Israel! . . .
> God bringeth him forth out of Egypt,
> He hath, as it were, the strength of the wild ox;
> He shall eat up the nations his adversaries,
> And shall break their bones in pieces,
> And smite them through with His arrows."

CHAPTER XIII.

RAHAB SAVED.

JOSHUA vi. 17, 22—25.

IT has not been the lot of Rahab to share the devout interest which has been lavished on Mary Magdalene. Our Correggios, Titians, and Carlo Dolcis have not attempted to represent the spirit of contrition and devotion transfiguring the face of the Canaanite girl. And this is not surprising. Rahab had never seen the human face of Jesus, nor heard the words that dropped like honey from His lips. She had never come under that inexpressible charm which lay in the bearing of the living Jesus, the charm that made so remarkable a change not only on the "woman that was a sinner," but on Zaccheus, on Peter in the high priest's hall, on the penitent thief, and on Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus. For there was a wonderful power in the very looks and tones of Jesus to touch the heart, and thereby to throw a new light on all one's past life, making sin look black and odious, and inspiring an intense desire for resemblance to Him who was so much fairer than all the children of men. Rahab had never seen the Divine image in any purer form than it appeared in Joshua and men and women like-minded with him.

But though she was not one of those whose contrite and holy love painters delight to represent, she belonged

to the same order, and in some respects is more remarkable than any of the New Testament penitents. For her light was much dimmer than theirs who lived in the days of the Son of man. She was utterly without support or sympathy from those among whom she lived, for with the exception of her own relations, who seem to have been influenced by herself, not a creature in Jericho shared her faith, or showed the slightest regard for the God of Israel.

But the time has now come for her to reap the reward of her faith and its works. In her case there was but a short interval between the sowing and the reaping. And God showed Himself able to do in her exceeding abundantly above what she could ask or think. For she was not only protected when Jericho and all its people were destroyed, but incorporated with the children of Israel. She became an heir of Abraham's blessing; she came among those "to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." An old tradition made her the wife of Joshua, but, according to the genealogies she married Salmon (Matt. i. 5), prince of the imperial tribe of Judah, great-grandfather of David, and ancestor of the Messiah. In the golden roll of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, she is the only woman who shares with Sarah, the great mother of the nation, the honour of a place among the heroes of the faith. Such honours could not have been attained by her had she not been a changed character,—one of those who erewhile "had lain among the pots, but who became like the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold."

Very special mention is made of her in the narrative

of the destruction of Jericho. In the first place, before the overthrow of the city, Joshua gives particular instructions regarding her, accepting very readily the promise that had been made to her by the two spies. If Joshua had been a man of unreasonable temper, he might have refused to ratify their action in her case. He might have said that God had doomed the whole inhabitants of the city to destruction, and as no instructions had been given by Him to spare Rahab, she must share the doom of the rest. But Joshua at once recognised the propriety of an exception in favour of one who had shown such faith, and who had rendered such service to the spies and to the nation; and, moreover, he looked on the promise made by the spies as reasonable, for it would have been gross tyranny to send them on such an errand without power to make fair compensation for any assistance they might receive. Yet how often have promises made in danger been broken when the danger was past! Rahab must have known that had it been some Canaanite chief and not Joshua that had to decide her fate, he would have scorned the promise of the spies, and consigned her to the general doom. She must have been impressed with the honourable conduct of Joshua in so cordially endorsing the promise of the spies, and thought well of his religion on that account. Honour and religion go well together; meanness and religion breed contempt. We see meanness with a religious profession culminating in the treachery of Judas. We see honour in alliance with religion culminating in the Garden of Gethsemane, when the bleeding Sufferer rallied His fainting courage and stood firm to His undertaking—"The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?"

No doubt the scarlet cord was hung from her window, as had been arranged with the spies, and the Israelites, when they saw it, would be reminded of the blood of the lamb sprinkled on their door posts and lintels when the destroying angel passed through Egypt. It was the two men who had acted as spies that Joshua instructed to enter her house, and bring out the woman and all that she had. And a happy woman she no doubt was when she saw the faces of her old guests, and under their protection was brought out with all her kindred and all that she had and led to a place of safety. It is a blessed time, after you have stood fast to duty while many have failed, when the hour comes that brings you peace and blessing, while it carries confusion and misery to the faithless. How thankful one is at such a moment for the grace that enabled one to choose the right! With what awe one looks into the gulf on whose edge one stood, and thanks God for the grace that brought the victory! And how often is the welfare of a lifetime secured in some crisis by the firm attitude of an hour. What do we not gain by patience when we do the right and wait for the reward? One of the pictures in the Interpreter's House is that of "a little room where sat two little children, each in his chair. The name of the eldest was Passion, and of the other Patience. Passion seemed much discontent, but Patience was very quiet. Then asked Christian, What is the reason of the discontent of Passion? The Interpreter answered, The Governor of them would have them stay for his best things till the beginning of the next year; but he will have them all now; but Patience is willing to wait." How invaluable is the spirit that can wait till the beginning of the next year! And especially with reference to the awards of eternity. The rush

for good things now, the desire at all hazards to gratify inclination as it rises, the impatience that will not wait till next year—how many lives they wreck, what misery they gender for eternity! But when you do choose that good part that shall not be taken away, and count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, what ecstatic bliss you make sure of in that solemn hour when the dead, small and great, shall stand before God; and, amid weeping and wailing inexpressible on the left hand, the Judge shall pronounce the words, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

The case of Rahab was one of those where whole families were saved on account of the faith of one member. Such was the case of Noah, whose faith secured the exemption of himself and all his family from the flood. Such, hypothetically, was the case of Lot, whose whole family would have been preserved from the fire and brimstone, if only they had received his warning and left Sodom with him. On the other hand, there were cases, like that of Korah in the wilderness, and of Achan, near this very place, Jericho, where the sin of the father involved the death of the whole family. In the case of Rahab, we find a family saved, not through the faith of the head of the house, but of a member of it, and that member a woman. The head of a Hebrew house was eminently a representative man, and by a well-understood and recognised law his family were implicated in his acts, whether for good or for evil. But in this case the protector of the family, the member of it that determines the fate of the whole, is not the one whom the law recognises, but his child, his daughter. A woman occupies here a higher and more influential

place, in relation to the rest of the family, than she has ever held at any previous time. The incident comes in as a kind of foreshadow of what was to be abundantly verified in after times. For it is in Christian times that woman has most conspicuously attained that position of high influence on the welfare of the family, and especially its eternal welfare, which Rahab showed in delivering her house from the destruction of Jericho.

At a very early period in the history of the Christian Church, the great influence of godly women on the welfare of their male relations began to be seen. About the fourth century we can hardly peruse the biography of any eminent Christian father, without being struck with the share which the prayers and efforts of some pious female relative had in his conversion. Monica, the mother ot Augustine, is held in reverence all over Christendom for her tears and wrestling prayers on behalf of her son; and the name of Anthusa, the mother of Chrysostom, is hardly less venerable. Nonna, the mother of Gregory Nazianzen; Macrina and Emmelia, the mother and the grandmother of Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa, as well as their sister, also called Macrina; Theosebia too, the wife of Gregory, and Marallina, the sister of Ambrose, all share a similar renown. And in more recent times, how many are the cases where sisters and daughters have exercised a blessed influence on brothers and fathers! Every right-hearted sister has a peculiarly warm and tender interest in the welfare of her brothers. It is a feeling not to be neglected, but carefully nursed and deepened. This narrative shows it to be in the line of God's providence that sisters and daughters shall prove instruments of deliverance to their relations. It is blessed when they are so even in earthly things, but

far more glorious when, through faith and prayer and unwearied interest, they are enabled to win them to Christ, and turn them into living epistles for Him.

It can hardly be necessary to dwell at length on the commentary which we find in the Epistle of James on the faith of Rahab. For it is not so much anything personal to her that he handles, but an important quality of all true faith, and of her faith as being true. "Was not Rahab the harlot justified by works when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?" No intelligent person needs to be told that the view of justification here given is in no wise at variance with that of St. Paul. Paul's doctrine was propounded in the early years of the Church, when, in opposition to the notion prevalent among the Gentiles, it was necessary to show clearly that there was no justifying merit in works. The doctrine of James was propounded at a later period, when men, presuming on free grace, were beginning to get lax in their practice, and it was necessary to insist that faith could not be true faith if it was not accompanied by corresponding works. The case of Rahab is employed by St. James to illustrate this latter position. If Rahab had merely professed belief in the God of Israel as the only true God, and in the certainty that Israel would possess the land, according to God's promise, her faith would have been a barren or dead faith; in other words, it would have been no true faith at all. It was her taking up the cause of the spies, protecting them, endangering her life for them, and then devising and executing a scheme for their safety, that showed her faith to be living, and therefore real. Let it be true that faith is only the instrument of justification, that it possesses no merit, and that its value

lies solely in its uniting us to Christ, so that we get justification and all other blessings from Him; still that which really unites us to Christ must be living. Dr. Chalmers used to sum up the whole doctrine in the formula, "We are justified by faith alone, but not by a faith which is alone."

But let us now advert to the reception of Rahab into the nation and church of the Israelites. "They brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel. . . . And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day; because she hid the messengers which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho." First, they left them without the camp. At first they could be treated only as unclean until the rites of purification should be performed. In the case of Rahab this was doubly necessary—owing to her race, and owing to her life. Thereafter they were admitted to the commonwealth of Israel, and had an interest in the covenants of promise. The ceremonial purification and the formal admission signified little, except in so far as they represented the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Ghost. Whether this vital change took place we are not told, but we seem justified in inferring it both from what we read in Hebrews and from the fact that Rahab was one of the ancestors of our Lord. It is interesting and instructive to think of her as exemplifying that law of grace by which the door of heaven is flung open even to the vilest sinner. "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound." When the enemy ensnares a woman, wiles her into the filthiest chambers of sin, and so enchains her there that she cannot escape, but must sink deeper and deeper in the mire, the case

is truly hopeless. More rapidly and more thoroughly than in the case of a man, the leprosy spreads till every virtuous principle is rooted out, and every womanly feeling is displaced by the passions of a sensual reprobate. "Son of man, can these bones live?" Is there any art to breathe the breath of purity and pure love into that defiled soul? Can such a woman ever find her home on the mountains of spices, and hear a loving bridegroom say, "My love, my undefiled is but one"? It is just here that the religion of the Bible achieves its highest triumphs. We say the religion of the Bible, but we should rather say, that gracious Being whose grace the Bible untolds. "The things that are impossible with men are possible with God." Jesus Christ is the prince of life. Experience of His saving grace, living fellowship with Him, can so change "fornicators and idolaters, and adulterers and effeminate and abusers of themselves with mankind, and thieves and covetous and drunkards and revilers and extortioners," that it may be said of them, "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Living faith in a living and loving Saviour can do all things.

Ten thousand times has this truth been illustrated in evangelistic addresses, in sermons, and in tracts innumerable from the case of the prodigal son. And what imagination can estimate the good which that parable has done? In this point of view it is strange that little use has been made of an Old Testament passage, in which the same truth is unfolded with touching beauty from the case of a faithless woman. We refer to the second chapter of Hosea. It is the case of a guilty and apparently shameless wife. Impelled by greed, meanest of all motives, she has gone after this lover

and that, because they seemed able to gratify her love of finery and luxury, and all the vain show of the world. But the time comes when her eyes are opened, her lovers are brought to desolation, she sees that they have all been a lie and a deception, and that no real good has ever come to her save from the husband whom she has forsaken and insulted. And now when she turns to him she is simply overwhelmed by his graciousness and generosity. He does all that can be done to make her forget her past miseries, all her past life, and he succeeds. The valley of Achor becomes a door of hope; she is so transformed inwardly, and her outward surroundings are so changed, that "she sings as in the days of her youth." The happy feelings of her unpolluted childhood return to her, as if she had drunk the waters of Lethe, and she sings like a light-hearted girl once more. The allegory is hardly an allegory,—it is Divine love that has effected the change; that love that many waters cannot quench and floods cannot drown.

We wonder whether Rahab obtained much help in her new life from the fellowship of those among whom she came when she joined the Church. If the Church then was what the Church ever ought to be, if its out-standing members were like the three fair damsels, Prudence, Piety and Charity, in the Palace Beautiful, no doubt she would be helped greatly. But it is not very often that that emblem is realized. And strange to say, among the members of our Churches now, we usually find a very imperfect sense of the duty which they owe to those who come among them from without, and especially out of great wickedness. It is quite possible that Rahab was chilled by the coldness of some of her Hebrew sisters, looking on her as an

intruder, looking on her as a reprobate, and grieved because their select society was broken in upon by this outlandish woman. And it is quite possible that she was disappointed to find that, though they were nominally the people of God, there was very little of what was divine or heavenly about them. So it often happens that what ought to be the greatest attraction in a Church, the character of its members, is the greatest repellant. If all sin-worn and world-worn souls, weary of the world's ways, and longing for a society more loving, more generous, more pure, more noble, could find in the Christian Church their ideal fulfilled, could find in the fellowship of Christians the reality of their dreams, how blessed would be the result! Alas, in too many cases they find the world's bitterness and meanness and selfishness reproduced under the flag of Christ! If all so-called Christians, it has been said, should live for but one year in accordance with the thirteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians, unbelief would vanish. Will the day ever be when every one that names the name of Christ shall be a living epistle, known and read of all men?

But, however she may have been affected by the spirit of those among whom she came, Rahab undoubtedly attained to a good degree before God, and a place of high honour in the Hebrew community. It was well for her that what at first arrested and impressed her was not anything in the people of Israel; it was the glorious attributes of their God. For this would preserve her substantially from disappointment. Men might change, or they might pass away, but God remained the same yesterday and to-day and for ever. If she kept looking to Him, admiring His grace and power, and drawing from His inexhaustible fulness,

she would be able to verify one at least of the prophet's pictures: "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord: for he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is: for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

CHAPTER XIV.

ACHAN'S TRESPASS.

JOSHUA vii.

A VESSEL in full sail scuds merrily over the waves. Everything betokens a successful and delightful voyage. The log has just been taken, marking an extraordinary run. The passengers are in the highest spirits, anticipating an early close of the voyage. Suddenly a shock is felt, and terror is seen on every face. The ship has struck on a rock. Not only is progress arrested, but it will be a mercy for crew and passengers if they can escape with their lives.

Not often so violently, but often as really, progress is arrested in many a good enterprise that seemed to be prospering to a wish. There may be no shock, but there is a stoppage of movement. The vital force that seemed to be carrying it on towards the desired consummation declines, and the work hangs fire. A mission that in its first stages was working out a beautiful transformation, becomes languid and advances no further. A Church, eminent for its zeal and spirituality, comes down to the ordinary level, and seems to lose its power. A family that promised well in infancy and childhood fails of its promise, its sons and daughters waver and fall. A similar result is often found in the undertakings of common life. Something mysterious

arrests progress in business or causes a decline. In "enterprises of great pith and moment," "the currents turn awry, and lose the name of action."

In all such cases we naturally wonder what can be the cause. And very often our explanation is wide of the mark. In religious enterprises, we are apt to fall back on the sovereignty and inscrutability of God. "He moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform." It seems good to Him, for unknown purposes of His own, to subject us to disappointment and trial. We do not impugn either His wisdom or His goodness; all is for the best. But, for the most part, we fail to detect the real reason. That the fault should lie with ourselves is the last thing we think of. We search for it in every direction rather than at home. We are ingenious in devising far-off theories and explanations, while the real offender is close at hand—"*Israel hath sinned.*"

It was an unexpected obstacle of this kind that Joshua now encountered in his next step towards possessing the land. Let us endeavour to understand his position and his plan. Jericho lay in the valley of the Jordan, and its destruction secured nothing for Joshua save the possession of that low-lying valley. From the west side of the valley rose a high mountain wall, which had to be ascended in order to reach the plateau of Western Palestine. Various ravines or passes ran down from the plateau into the valley; at the top of one of these, a little to the north of Jericho, was Bethel, and farther down the pass, nearer the plain, the town or village of Ai. No remains of Ai are now visible, nor is there any tradition of the name, so that its exact position cannot be ascertained. It was an insignificant place, but necessary to be taken, in order to give

Joshua command of the pass, and enable him to reach the plateau above. The plan of Joshua seems to have been to gain command of the plateau about this point, and thereby, as it were, cut the country in two, so that he might be able to deal in succession with its southern and its northern sections. If once he could establish himself in the very centre of the country, keeping his communications open with the Jordan valley, he would be able to deal with his opponents in detail, and thus prevent those in the one section from coming to the assistance of the other. Neither Ai nor Bethel seemed likely to give him trouble; they were but insignificant places, and a very small force would be sufficient to deal with them.

Hitherto Joshua had been eminently successful, and his people too. Not a hitch had occurred in all the arrangements. The capture of Jericho had been an unqualified triumph. It seemed as if the people of Ai could hardly fail to be paralysed by its fate. After reconnoitring Ai, Joshua saw that there was no need for mustering the whole host against so poor a place—a detachment of two or three thousand would be enough. The three thousand went up against it as confidently as if success were already in their hands. It was probably a surprise to find its people making any attempt to drive them off. The men of Israel were not prepared for a vigorous onslaught, and when it came thus unexpectedly they were taken aback and fled in confusion. As the men of Ai pursued them down the pass, they had no power to rally or retrieve the battle; the rout was complete, some of the men were killed, while consternation was carried into the host, and their whole enterprise seemed doomed to failure.

And now for the first time Joshua appears in a some-

what humiliating light. He is not one of the men that never make a blunder. He rends his clothes, falls on his face with the elders before the ark of the Lord till even, and puts dust upon his head. There is something too abject in this prostration. And when he speaks to God, it is in the tone of complaint and in the language of unbelief. "Alas, O Lord God, wherefore hast Thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan! O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies! For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?" Thus Joshua almost throws the blame on God. He seems to have no idea that it may lie in quite another quarter. And very strangely, he adopts the very tone and almost the language of the ten spies, against which he had protested so vehemently at the time: "Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt, or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey?" What has become of all your courage, Joshua, on that memorable day? Is this the man to whom God said so lately, "Be strong, and of good courage; as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee. I will not fail thee nor forsake thee"? Like Peter on the waters, and like so many of ourselves, he begins to sink when the wind is contrary, and his cry is the querulous wail of a frightened child! After all he is but flesh and blood.

Now it is God's turn to speak. "Get thee up;

wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?" Why do you turn on Me as if I had suddenly changed, and become forgetful of My promise? Alas, my friends how often is God slandered by our complaints! How often do we feel and even speak as if He had broken His word and forgotten His promise, as if He had induced us to trust in Him, and accept His service, only to humiliate us before the world, and forsake us in some great crisis! No wonder if God speak sharply to Joshua, and to us if we go in Joshua's steps. No wonder if He refuse to be pleased with our prostration, our wringing of our hands and sobbing, and calls us to change our attitude. "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?"

Then comes the true explanation—"Israel hath sinned." Might you not have divined that this was the real cause of your trouble? Is not sin directly or indirectly the cause of all trouble? What was it that broke up the joy and peace of Paradise? Sin. What brought the flood of waters over the face of the earth to destroy it? Sin. What caused the confusion of Babel and scattered the inhabitants over the earth in hostile races? Sin. What brought desolation on that very plain of Jordan, and buried its cities and its people under an avalanche of fire and brimstone? Sin. What caused the defeat of Israel at Hormah forty years ago, and doomed all the generation to perish in the wilderness? Sin. What threw down the walls of Jericho only a few days ago, gave its people to the sword of Israel, and reduced its homes and its bulwarks to the mass of ruins you see *there*? Again, sin. Can you not read the plainest lesson? Can you not divine that this trouble which has come on you is due to the same cause with all the rest? And if it be a first principle

of Providence that all trouble is due to sin, would it not be more suitable that you and your elders should now be making diligent search for it, and trying to get it removed, than that you should be lying on your faces and howling to me, as if some sudden caprice or unworthy humour of mine had brought this distress upon you?

"Behold, the Lord's ear is not heavy that it cannot hear, nor His arm shortened that it cannot save. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God." What a curse that sin is, in ways and forms, too, which we do not suspect! And yet we are usually so very careless about it. How little pains we take to ascertain its presence, or to drive it away from among us! How little tenderness of conscience we show, how little burning desire to be kept from the accursed thing! And when we turn to our opponents and see sin in them, instead of being grieved, we fall on them savagely to upbraid them, and we hold them up to open scorn. How little we think if they are guilty, that their sin has intercepted the favour of God, and involved not them only, but probably the whole community in trouble! How unsatisfactory to God must seem the bearing even of the best of us in reference to sin! Do we really think of it as the object of God's abhorrence? As that which destroyed Paradise, as that which has covered the earth with lamentation and mourning and woe, kindled the flames of hell, and brought the Son of God to suffer on the cross? If only we had some adequate sense of sin, should we not be constantly making it our prayer—"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"?

The peculiar covenant relation in which Israel stood

to God caused a method to be fallen on for detecting their sin that is not available for us. The whole people were to be assembled next morning, and inquiry was to be made for the delinquent in God's way, and when the individual was found condign punishment was to be inflicted. First the tribe was to be ascertained, then the family, then the man. For this is God's way of tracking sin. It might be more pleasant to us that He should deal with it more generally, and having ascertained, for example, that the wrong had been done by a particular tribe or community, inflict a fine or other penalty on that tribe in which we should willingly bear our share. For it does not grieve us very much to sin when every one sins along with us. Nay, we can even make merry over the fact that we are all sinners together, all in the same condemnation, in the same disgrace. But it is a different thing when we are dealt with one by one. The tribe is taken, the family is taken, but that is not all; the household that God shall take shall come MAN BY MAN! It is that individualizing of us that we dread; it is when it comes to that, that "conscience makes cowards of us all." When a sinner is dying, he becomes aware that this individualizing process is about to take place, and hence the fear which he often feels. He is no longer among the multitude, death is putting him by himself, and God is coming to deal with him by himself. If he could only be hid in the crowd it would not matter, but that searching eye of God—who can stand before it? What will all the excuses or disguises or glosses he can devise avail before Him who "sets our iniquities before Him, our secret sins in the light of His countenance"? "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight; for all things are naked, and opened unto

the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Happy, in that hour, they who have found the Divine covering for sin: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile."

But before passing on to the result of the scrutiny, we find ourselves face to face with a difficult question. If, as is here intimated, it was one man that sinned, why should the whole nation have been dealt with as guilty? Why should the historian, in the very first verse of this chapter, summarise the transaction by saying: "But the *children of Israel* committed a trespass in the devoted thing: for *Achan*, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the devoted thing; and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel"? Why visit the offence of Achan on the whole congregation, causing a peculiarly humiliating defeat to take place before an insignificant enemy, demoralizing the whole host, driving Joshua to distraction, and causing the death of six-and-thirty men?

In dealing with a question of this sort, it is indispensable that we station ourselves at that period of the world's history; we must place before our minds some of the ideas that were prevalent at the time, and abstain from judging of what was done then by a standard which is applicable only to our own day.

And certain it is that, what we now call the *solidarity* of mankind, the tendency to look on men rather as the members of a community than as independent individuals, each with an inalienable standing of his own, had a hold of men's minds then such as it has not to-day, certainly among Western nations. To a certain extent, this

principle of solidarity is inwoven in the very nature of things, and cannot be eliminated, however we may try. Absolute independence and isolation of individuals are impossible. In families, we suffer for one another's faults, even when we hold them in abhorrence. We benefit by one another's virtues, though we may have done our utmost to discourage and destroy them. In the Divine procedure toward us, the principle of our being a corporate body is often acted upon. The covenant of Adam was founded on it, and the fall of our first parents involved the fall of all their descendants. In the earlier stages of the Hebrew economy, wide scope was given to the principle. It operated in two forms: sometimes the individual suffered for the community, and sometimes the community for the individual. And the operation of the principle was not confined to the Hebrew or to other Oriental communities. Even among the Romans it had a great influence. Admirable though Roman law was in its regulation of property, it was very defective in its dealings with persons. "Its great blot was the domestic code. The son was the property of the father, without rights, without substantial being, in the eye of Roman law. . . . The wife again was the property of her husband, an ownership of which the moral result was most disastrous."[1]

We are to remember that practically the principle of solidarity was fully admitted in Joshua's time among his people. The sense of injustice and hardship to which it might give rise among us did not exist. Men recognised it as a law of wide influence in human affairs, to which they were bound to defer.

[1] See Mozley's "Ruling Ideas in the Early Ages," p. 40.

Hence it was that when it became known that one man's offence lay at the foundation of the defeat before Ai, and of the displeasure of God toward the people at large, there was no outcry, no remonstrance, no complaint of injustice. This could hardly take place if the same thing were to happen now. It is hard to reconcile the transaction with our sense of justice. And no doubt, if we view the matter apart and by itself, there may be some ground for this feeling. But the transaction will assume another aspect if we view it as but a part of a great whole, of a great scheme of instruction and discipline which God was developing in connection with Israel. In this light, instead of a hardship it will appear that in the end a very great benefit was conferred on the people.

Let us think of Achan's temptation. A large amount of valuable property fell into the hands of the Israelites at Jericho. By a rigorous law, all was devoted to the service of God. Now a covetous man like Achan might find many plausible reasons for evading this law. "What I take to myself (he might say) will never be missed. There are hundreds of Babylonish garments, there are many wedges of gold, and silver shekels without number, amply sufficient for the purpose for which they are devoted. If I were to deprive another man of his rightful share, I should be acting very wickedly; but I am really doing nothing of the kind. I am only diminishing imperceptibly what is to be used for a public purpose. Nobody will suffer a whit by what I do,—it cannot be very wrong."

Now the great lesson taught very solemnly and impressively to the whole nation was, that this was just awfully wrong. The moral benefit which the nation ultimately got from the transaction was, that

this kind of sophistry, this flattering unction which leads so many persons ultimately to destruction, was exploded and blown to shivers. A most false mode of measuring the criminality of sin was stamped with deserved reprobation. Every man and woman in the nation got a solemn warning against a common but ruinous temptation. In so far as they laid to heart this warning during the rest of the campaign, they were saved from disastrous evil, and thus, in the long run, they profited by the case of Achan.

That sin is to be held sinful only when it hurts your fellow-creatures, and especially the poor among your fellow-creatures, is a very common impression, but surely it is a delusion of the devil. That it has such effects may be a gross aggravation of the wickedness, but it is not the heart and core of it. And how can you know that it will not hurt others? Not hurt your fellow-countrymen, Achan? Why, that secret sin of yours has caused the death of thirty-six men, and a humiliating defeat of the troops before Ai. More than that, it has separated between the nation and God. Many say, when they tell a lie, it was not a malignant lie, it was a lie told to screen some one, not to expose him, therefore it was harmless. But you cannot trace the consequences of that lie, any more than Achan could trace the consequences of his theft, otherwise you would not dare to make that excuse. Many that would not steal from a poor man, or waste a poor man's substance, have little scruple in wasting a rich man's substance, or in peculating from Government property. Who can measure the evil that flows from such ways of trifling with the inexorable law of right, the damage done to conscience, and the guilt contracted before God? Is there safety for man or woman except in the most rigid

regard to right and truth, even in the smallest portions of them with which they have to do? Is there not something utterly fearful in the propagating power of sin, and in its way of involving others, who are perfectly innocent, in its awful doom? Happy they who from their earliest years have had a salutary dread of it, and of its infinite ramifications of misery and woe!

How well fitted for us, especially when we are exposed to temptation, is that prayer of the psalmist: "Who can understand his errors? cleanse Thou me from secret faults. Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be perfect, and I shall be clear of great transgression."

CHAPTER XV.

ACHAN'S PUNISHMENT.

JOSHUA vii.

"BE sure your sin will find you out." It has an awful way of leaving its traces behind it, and confronting the sinner with his crime. "Though he hide himself in the top of Carmel, I will search and take him out thence; and though he be hid from My sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite him" (Amos ix. 3). "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccles. xii. 14).

When Achan heard of the muster that was to take place next morning, in order to detect the offender, he must have spent a miserable night. Between the consciousness of guilt, the sense of the mischief he had done, the dread of detection, and the foreboding of retribution, his nerves were too much shaken to admit the possibility of sleep. Weariedly and anxiously he must have tossed about as the hours slowly revolved, unable to get rid of his miserable thoughts, which would ever keep swimming about him like the changing forms of a kaleidoscope, but with the same dark vision of coming doom.

At length the day dawns, the tribes muster, the

inquiry begins. It is by the sure, solemn, simple, process of the lot that the case is to be decided. First the lot is cast for the tribes, and the tribe of Judah is taken. That must have given the first pang to Achan. Then the tribe is divided into its families, and the family of the Zarhites is taken; then the Zarhite family is brought out man by man, and Zabdi, the father of Achan, is taken. May we not conceive the heart of Achan giving a fresh beat as each time the casting of the lot brought the charge nearer and nearer to himself? The coils are coming closer and closer about him; and now his father's family is brought out, man by man, and Achan is taken. He is quite a young man, for his father could only have been a lad when he left Egypt. Look at him, pale, trembling, stricken with shame and horror, unable to hide himself, feeling it would be such a relief if the earth would open its jaws and swallow him up, as it swallowed Korah. Look at his poor wife; look at his father; look at his children.— What a load of misery he has brought on himself and on them! Yes, the way of transgressors *is* hard.

Joshua's heart is overcome, and he deals gently with the young man. "My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto Him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me." There was infinite kindness in that word "my son." It reminds us of that other Joshua, the Jesus of the New Testament, so tender to sinners, so full of love even for those who had been steeped in guilt. It brings before us the Great High Priest, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, seeing He was in all things tempted like as we are, yet without sin. A harsh word from Joshua might have set Achan in a defiant attitude, and drawn from him a denial that he had done anything

amiss. How often do we see this! A child or a servant has done wrong; you are angry, you speak harshly, you get a flat denial. Or if the thing cannot be denied, you get only a sullen acknowledgment, which takes away all possibility of good arising out of the occurrence, and embitters the relation of the parties to each other.

But not only did Joshua speak kindly to Achan, he confronted him with God, and called on him to think how He was concerned in this matter. "Give glory to the Lord God of Israel." Vindicate Him from the charge which I and others have virtually been bringing against Him, of proving forgetful of His covenant. Clear Him of all blame, declare His glory, declare that He is unsullied in His perfections, and show that He has had good cause to leave us to the mercy of our enemies. No man as yet knew what Achan had done. He might have been guilty of some act of idolatry, or of some unhallowed sensuality like that which had lately taken place at Baal-peor; in order that the transaction might carry its lesson, it was necessary that the precise offence should be known. Joshua's kindly address and his solemn appeal to Achan to clear the character of God had the desired effect. "Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: when I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it."

The confession certainly was frank and full; but whether it was made in the spirit of true contrition,

or whether it was uttered in the hope that it would mitigate the sentence to be inflicted, we cannot tell. It would be a comfort to us to think that Achan was sincerely penitent, and that the miserable doom which befell him and his family ended their troubles, and formed the dark introduction to a better life. Where there is even a possibility that such a view is correct we naturally draw to it, for it is more than our hearts can well bear to think of so awful a death being followed by eternal misery.

Certain it is that Joshua earnestly desired to lead Achan to deal with God in the matter. "Make confession," he said, "unto Him." He knew the virtue of confession to God. For "he that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Prov. xxviii. 13). "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day. . . . I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Psalm xxxii. 3, 5). It is a hopeful circumstance in Achan's case that it was after this solemn call to deal with God in the matter that he made his confession. One hopes that the sudden appearance on the scene of the God whom he had so sadly forgotten, led him to see his sin in its true light, and drew out the acknowledgment,—"Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned." For no moral effect can be greater than that arising from the difference between sin covered and sin confessed to God. Sin covered is the fruitful parent of excuses, and sophistries, and of all manner of attempts to disguise the harsh features of transgression, and to show that, after all, there was not much wrong in it.

Sin confessed to God shows a fitting sense of the evil, of the shame which it brings, and of the punishment which it deserves, and an earnest longing for that forgiveness and renewal which, the gospel now shows us so clearly, come from Jesus Christ. For nothing becomes a sinner before God so well as when he breaks down. It is the moment of a new birth when he sees what miserable abortions all the refuges of lies are, and, utterly despairing of being able to hide himself from God in his filthy rags, unbosoms everything to Him with whom "there is mercy and plenteous redemption, and who will redeem Israel from all his transgressions."

It is a further presumption that Achan was a true penitent, that he told so frankly where the various articles that he had appropriated were to be found. "Behold, they are hid in the midst of my tent." They were scalding his conscience so fearfully that he could not rest till they were taken away from the abode which they polluted and cursed. They seemed to be crying out against him and his with a voice which could not be silenced. To bring them away and expose them to public view might bring no relaxation of the doom which he expected, but it would be a relief to his feelings if they were dragged from the hiding hole to which he had so wickedly consigned them. For the articles were now as hateful to him as formerly they had been splendid and delightful. The curse of God was on them now, and on him too on their account. Is there anything darker or deadlier than the curse of God?

And now the consummation arrives. Messengers are sent to his tent, they find the stolen goods, they bring them to Joshua, and to all the children of Israel, and they lay them out before the Lord. We are not

told how the judicial sentence was arrived at. But there seems to have been no hesitation or delay about it. "Joshua and all the children of Israel took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and they burned him with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the Lord turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day."

It seems a terrible punishment, but Achan had already brought defeat and disgrace on his countrymen, he had robbed God, and brought the whole community to the brink of ruin. It must have been a strong lust that led him to play with such consequences. What sin is there to which covetousness has not impelled men? And, strange to say, it is a sin which has received but little check from all the sad experience of the past. Is it not as daring as ever to-day? Is it not the parent of that gambling habit which is the terror of all good men, sapping our morality and our industry, and disposing tens of thousands to trust to the bare chance of an unlikely contingency, rather than to God's blessing on honest industry? Is it not sheer covetousness that turns the confidential clerk into a robber of his employer, and uses all the devices of cunning to discover how long he can carry on his infamous plot, till the inevitable day of detection arrive and he must fly, a fugitive and a vagabond, to a foreign

land? Is it not covetousness that induces the blithe young maiden to ally herself to one whom she knows to be a moral leper, but who is high in rank and full of wealth? Is it not the same lust that induces the trader to send his noxious wares to savage countries and drive the miserable inhabitants to a deeper misery and degradation than ever? Catastrophes are always happening: the ruined gambler blows out his brains; the dishonest clerk becomes a convict, the unhappy young wife gets into the divorce court, the scandalous trader sinks into bankruptcy and misery. But there is no abatement of the lust which makes such havoc. If the old ways of indulging it are abandoned, new outlets are always being found. Education does not cripple it; civilization does not uproot it; even Christianity does not always overcome it. It goeth about, if not like a roaring lion, at least like a cunning serpent intent upon its prey. Within the Church, where the minister reads out "Thou shalt not covet," and where men say with apparent devoutness, "Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law"—as soon as their backs are turned, they are scheming to break it. Still, as of old, "love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after they erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

Achan's sin has found him out, and he suffers its bitter doom. All his visions of comfort and enjoyment to be derived from his unlawful gain are rudely shattered. The pictures he has been drawing of what he will do with the silver and the gold and the garment are for ever dispersed. He has brought disaster on the nation, and shame and ruin on himself and his house. In all coming time, he must stand in the pillory of history

as the man who stole the forbidden spoil of Jericho. That disgraceful deed is the only thing that will ever be known of him. Further, he has sacrificed his life. Young though he is, his life will be cut short, and all that he has hoped for of enjoyment and honour will be exchanged for a horrible death and an execrable memory. O sin, thou art a hard master! Thou draggest thy slaves, often through a short and rapid career, to misery and to infamy!

Nevertheless, the hand of God is seen here. The punishment of sin is one of the inexorable conditions of His government. It may look dark and ugly to us, but it is there. It may create a very different feeling from the contemplation of His love and goodness, but in our present condition that feeling is wholesome and necessary. As we follow unpardoned sinners into the future world, it may be awful, it may be dismal to think of a state from which punishment will never be absent; but the awfulness and the dismalness will not change the fact. It is the mystery of God's character that He is at once infinite love and infinite righteousness. And if it be unlawful for us to exclude His love and dwell only on His justice, it is equally unlawful to exclude His justice and dwell only on His love. Now, as of old, His memorial is, "The Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty."

But if it be awful to contemplate the death, and the mode of death of Achan, how much more when we think that his wife and his sons and his daughters were stoned to death along with him! Would that not have been a barbarous deed in any case, and was it not much more so if they were wholly innocent of his offence?

To mitigate the harshness of this deed, some have supposed that they were privy to his sin, if not instigators of it. But of this we have not a tittle of evidence, and the whole drift of the narrative seems to show that the household suffered in the same manner and on the same ground as that of Korah (Num. xvi. 31-33). As regards the mode of death, it was significant of a harsh and hard-tempered age. Neither death nor the sufferings of the dying made much impression on the spectators. This callousness is almost beyond our comprehension, the tone of feeling is so different now. But we must accept the fact as it was. And as to the punishment of the wife and children, we must fall back on that custom of the time which not only gave to the husband and father the sole power and responsibility of the household, but involved the wife and children in his doom if at any time he should expose himself to punishment. As has already been said, neither the wife nor the children had any rights as against the husband and father; as his will was the sole law, so his retribution was the common inheritance of all. With him they were held to sin, and with him they suffered. They were considered to belong to him just as his hands and his feet belonged to him. It may seem to us very hard, and when it enters, even in a modified form, into the Divine economy we may cry out against it. Many do still, and ever will cry out against original sin, and against all that has come upon our race in consequence of the sin of Adam.

But it is in vain to fight against so apparent a fact. Much wiser surely it is to take the view of the Apostle Paul, and rejoice that, under the economy of the gospel, the principle of imputation becomes the source of blessing infinitely greater than the evil which it brought

at the fall. It is one of the greatest triumphs of the Apostle's mode of reasoning that, instead of shutting his eyes to the law of imputation, he scans it carefully, and compels it to yield a glorious tribute to the goodness of God. When his theme was the riches of the grace of God, one might have thought that he would desire to give a wide berth to that dark fact in the Divine economy—the imputation of Adam's sin. But instead of desiring to conceal it, he brings it forward in all its terribleness and universality of application; but with the skill of a great orator, he turns it round to his side by showing that the imputation of Christ's righteousness has secured results that outdo all the evil flowing from the imputation of Adam's sin. "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that, as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. v. 18-21).

Very special mention is made of the place where the execution of Achan and his family took place. "They brought them unto the valley of Achor, . . . and they raised over him a great heap of stones, . . . wherefore the name of that place is called, The valley of Achor, unto this day." Achor, which means *trouble*, seems to have been a small ravine near the lower part of the valley in which Ai was situated, and therefore near the scene of the disaster that befell the Israelites. It was

not an old name, but a name given at the time, derived from the occurrence of which it had just been the scene. It seemed appropriate that poor Achan should suffer at the very place where others had suffered on his account. It is subsequently referred to three times in Scripture. Later in this book it is given as part of the northern boundary of the tribe of Judah (chap. xv. 7); in Isaiah (lxv. 10) it is referred to on account of its fertility; and in Hosea (ii. 15) it is introduced in the beautiful allegory of the restored wife, who has been brought into the wilderness, and made to feel her poverty and misery, but of whom God says, "I will give her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope." The reference seems to be to the evil repute into which that valley fell by the sin of Achan, when it became the valley of trouble. For, by Achan's sin, what had appeared likely to prove the door of access for Israel into the land was shut; a double trouble came on the people—partly because of their defeat, and partly because their entrance into the land appeared to be blocked. In Hosea's picture of Israel penitent and restored, the valley is again turned to its natural use, and instead of a scene of trouble it again becomes a door of hope, a door by which they may hope to enter their inheritance. It is a door of hope for the penitent wife, a door by which she may return to her lost happiness. The underlying truth is, that when we get into a right relation to God, what were formerly evils become blessings, hindrances are turned into helps. Sin deranges everything, and brings trouble everywhere. The ground was cursed on account of Adam: not literally, but indirectly, inasmuch as it needed hard and exhausting toil, it needed the sweat of his face to make it yield him a maintenance. "We

know," says the Apostle, "that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." "For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered out of the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

No man can tell all the "trouble" that has come into the world by reason of sin. As little can we know the full extent of that deliverance that shall take place when sin comes to an end. If we would know anything of this we must go to those passages which picture to us the new heavens and the new earth: "In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CAPTURE OF AI.

JOSHUA viii. 1—29.

JOSHUA, having dealt faithfully with the case of Achán, whose sin had intercepted the favour of God, is again encouraged, and directed to renew, but more carefully, his attack on Ai. That word is addressed to him which has always such significance when coming from the Divine lips—"Fear not." How much of our misery arises from fear! How many a beating heart, how many a shaking nerve, how many a sleepless night have come, not from evil experienced, but from evil apprehended! To save one from the apprehension of evil is sometimes more important, as it is usually far more difficult, than to save one from evil itself. An affectionate father finds that one of his most needed services to his children is to allay their fears. Never is he doing them a greater kindness than when he uses his larger experience of life to assure them, in some anxiety, that there is no cause for fear. Our heavenly Father finds much occasion for a similar course. He has indeed got a very timid family. It is most interesting to mark how the Bible is studded with "fear nots," from Genesis to Revelation; from that early word to Abraham—"Fear not, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward"—to that most comforting

assurance to the beloved disciple, "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hades and of death." If only God's children could hear Him uttering that one word, from how much anxiety and misery would it set them free!

Virtually the command to Joshua is to "try again." Success, though denied to the first effort, often comes to the next, or at least to a subsequent one. Even apart from spiritual considerations, it is those who try oftenest who succeed best. There is little good in a man who abandons an undertaking simply because he has tried once and failed. Who does not recall in this connection the story of Alfred the Great? Or of Robert the Bruce watching the spider in the barn that at last reached the roof after sixteen failures? Or, looking to what has a more immediate bearing on the kingdom of God, who has not admired the perseverance of Livingstone, undaunted by fever and famine, and the ferocity of savage chiefs; unmoved by his longings for home and dreams of plenty and comfort that mocked him when he awoke to physical wretchedness and want? Such perseverance gives a man the stamp of true nobility; we are almost tempted to fall down and worship. If failure be humiliating, it is redeemed by the very act and attitude of perseverance, and the self-denial and scorn of ease which it involves. In the Christian warfare no man is promised victory at the first. "Let us not be weary in welldoing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not."

To Christian men especially, failure brings very valuable lessons. There is always something to be learned from it. In our first attempt we were too self-confident. We went too carelessly about the matter,

and did not sufficiently realize the need of Divine support. Never was there a servant of God who learned more from his failures than St. Peter. Nothing could have been more humiliating than his thrice-repeated denial of his Lord. But when Peter came to himself, he saw on what a bruised reed he had been leaning when he said, "Though I should die with Thee yet will I not deny Thee." How miserably misplaced that self-confidence had been! But it had the effect of startling him, of showing him his danger, and of leading him to lift up his eyes to the hills from whence came his help. It might have seemed a risky, nay reckless thing for our Lord to commit the task of steering His infant Church over the stormy seas of her first voyage to a man who, six weeks before, had proved so weak and treacherous. But Peter was a genuine man, and it was that first failure that afterwards made him so strong. It is no longer Peter, but Christ in Peter that directs the movement. And thus it came to pass that, during the critical period of the Church's birth, no carnal drawback diminished his strength or diluted his faith; all his natural rapidity of movement, all his natural outspokenness, boldness, and directness were brought to bear without abatement on the advancement of the young cause. He conducted himself during this most delicate and vital period with a nobility beyond all praise. He took the ship out into the open sea amid raging storms without touching a single rock. And it was all owing to the fact that by God's grace he profited by his failure!

In the case of Joshua and his people, one of the chief lessons derived from their failure before Ai was the evil of covering sin. Alas, this policy is the cause of failures innumerable in the spiritual life! In numberless

ways it interrupts Divine fellowship, withdraws the Divine blessing, and grieves the Holy Spirit. We have not courage to cut off a right hand and pluck out a right eye. We leave besetting sins in a corner of our hearts, instead of trying to exterminate them, and determining not to allow them a foothold there. The acknowledgment of sin, the giving up of all leniency towards it, the determination, by God's grace, to be done with it, always go before true revivals, before a true return of God to us in all His graciousness and power. Rather, we should say, they are the beginning of revival. In Israel of old the land had to be purged of every vestige of idolatry under Hezekiah and other godly kings, before the light of God's countenance was again lifted upon it. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at My word."

Joshua is instructed to go up again against Ai, but in order to interest and encourage the people, he resorts to a new plan of attack. A stratagem is to be put in operation. An ambuscade is to be stationed on the west side of the city, while the main body of the assaulting force is to approach it, as formerly, from the east. There is some obscurity and apparent confusion in the narrative, confined, however, to one point, the number composing the ambuscade and the main body respectively. Some error in the text appears to have crept in. From the statement in ver. 3 we might suppose that the men who were to lie in ambush amounted to thirty thousand; but in ver. 12 it is expressly stated that only five thousand were employed in this way. There can be little doubt (though it is not according to the letter of the narrative) that the whole force employed amounted to thirty thousand,

and that, of these, five thousand formed the ambush. Indeed, in such a valley, it would not have been possible for thirty thousand men to conceal themselves so as to be invisible from the city. It would appear (ver. 17) that the people of Bethel had left their own village and gone into Ai. Bethel, as we have said, was situated higher up; in fact, it was on the very ridge of the plateau of Western Palestine. It must have been but a little place, and its people seem to have deemed it better to join those of Ai, knowing that if the Israelites were repulsed from the lower city, the upper was safe.

The *ruse* was that the ambush should be concealed behind the city; that Ai, as before, should be attacked from the east by the main body of troops; that on receiving the onslaught from the city they should seem to be defeated as before; that Joshua, probably standing on some commanding height, should give a signal to the men in ambush by raising his spear; whereupon these men should rush down on the now deserted place and set it on fire. On seeing the flames, the pursuers would naturally turn and rush back to extinguish them; then the main body of Israel would turn likewise, and thus the enemy would be caught as in a trap from which there was no escape, and fall a victim to the two sections of Israel.

To plots of this kind, the main objection in a strategical sense lies in the risk of detection. For the five thousand who went to station themselves in the west it was a somewhat perilous thing to separate themselves from the host, and place themselves in the heart of enemies both in front and in rear. It needed strong faith to expose themselves in such a situation. Suppose they had been detected as they went stealing along

past Ai in the darkness of the night; suppose they had come on some house or hamlet, and wakened the people, so that the alarm should have been carried to Ai, what would have been the result? It was well for Israel that no such mishap occurred, and that they were able in silence to reach a place where they might lie concealed. The ground is so broken by rocks and ravines that this would not have been very difficult; the people of Ai suspected nothing; probably the force on the east were at pains, by camp-fires and otherwise, to engage their attention, and whenever that force began to move, as if for the attack, every eye in the city would be fixed intently upon it.

The plot was entirely successful; everything fell out precisely as Joshua had desired. A terrible slaughter of the men of Ai took place, caught as they were on the east of the city between the two sections of Joshua's troops, for the Israelites gave no quarter either to age or sex. The whole number of the slain amounted to twelve thousand, and that probably included the people of Bethel too. We see from this what an insignificant place Ai must have been, and how very humiliating was the defeat it inflicted at first. With reference to the spoil of the city, the rigid law prescribed at Jericho was not repeated; the people got it for themselves. Jericho was an exceptional case; it was the firstfruits of the conquest, therefore holy to the Lord. If Achan had but waited a little, he would have had his share of the spoil of Ai or some other place. He would have got legitimately what he purloined unlawfully. In the slaughter, the king, or chief of the place, suffered a more ignominious doom than his soldiers; instead of being slain with the sword, he was hanged, and his body was exposed on a tree till sunset. Joshua did not want

some drops of Oriental blood; he had the stern pleasure of the Eastern warrior in humbling those who were highest in honour. What remained of the city was burned; it continued thereafter a heap of ruins, with a great cairn of stones at its gate, erected over the dead body of the king.

We see that already light begins to be thrown on what at the time must have seemed the very severe and rigid order about the spoil of Jericho. Although Achan was the only offender, he was probably far from being the only complainer on that occasion. Many another Israelite with a covetous heart must have felt bitterly that it was very hard to be prevented from taking even an atom to oneself. "Were not our fathers allowed to spoil the Egyptians—why, then, should we be absolutely prevented from having a share of the spoil of Jericho?" It might have been enough to answer that God claimed the firstfruits of the land for Himself. Or to say that God designed at the very entrance of His people into Canaan to show that they were not a tumultuous rabble, rushing greedily on all they could lay their hands on, but a well-trained, well-mannered family, in whom self-restraint was one of the noblest virtues. But to all this it might have been added, that the people's day was not far off. It is not God's method to muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And so to all who rush tumultuously upon the good things of this life, He says, "Seek first the kingdom of heaven and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Let God arrange the order in which His gifts are distributed. Never hurry Providence, as Sarah did when she gave Hagar to Abraham. Sarah had good cause to repent of her impetuosity; it brought her many a bitter hour. Whereas God was really kinder

to her than she had thought, and in due time He gave her Isaac, not the son of the bondwoman, but her own.

A question has been raised respecting the legitimacy of the stratagem employed by Joshua in order to capture Ai. Was it right to deceive the people; to pretend to be defeated while in reality he was only executing a *ruse*, and thus draw on the poor men of Ai to a terrible death? Calvin and other commentators make short work of this objection. If war is lawful, stratagem is lawful. Stratagem indeed, as war used to be conducted, was a principal part of it; and even now the term "strategic," derived from it, is often used to denote operations designed for a different purpose from that which at first appears. It is needless to discuss here the lawfulness of war, for the Israelites were waging war at the express command of the Almighty. And if it be said that when once you allow the principle that it is lawful in war to mislead the enemy, you virtually allow perfidy, inasmuch as it would be lawful for you, after pledging your word under a flag of truce, to disregard your promise, the answer to that is, that to mislead in such circumstances would be infamous. A distinction is to be drawn between acts where the enemy has no right to expect that you will make known your intention, and acts where they have such a right. In the ordinary run of strategic movements, you are under no obligation to tell the foe what you are about. It is part of their business to watch you, to scrutinize your every movement, and in spite of appearances to divine your real purpose. If they are too careless to watch, or too stupid to discern between a professed and a real plan, they must bear the consequences. But when a flag of truce is displayed, when a meeting takes place under its protection, and when conditions are agreed to

on both sides, the case is very different. The enemy is entitled now to expect that you will not mislead them. Your word of honour has been passed to that effect. And to disregard that pledge, and deem it smart to mislead thereby, is a proceeding worthy only of the most barbarous, the most perfidious, the most shameless of men.

Thus far we may defend the usages of war; but at best it is a barbarous mode of operations. Very memorable was the observation of the Duke of Wellington, that next to the calamity of suffering a defeat was that of gaining a victory. To look over a great battle-field, fresh from the clash of arms; to survey the trampled crops, the ruined houses, the universal desolation; to gaze on all the manly forms lying cold in death, and the many besides wounded, bleeding, groaning, perhaps dying; to think of the illimitable treasure that has been lavished on this work of destruction and the comforts of which it has robbed the countries engaged; to remember in what a multitude of cases, death must carry desolation and anguish to the poor widow, and turn the remainder of life into a lonely pilgrimage, is enough surely to rob war of the glory associated with it, and to make good the position that on the part of civilized and Christian men it should only be the last desperate resort, after every other means of effecting its object has failed. We are not forgetful of the manly self-sacrifice of those who expose themselves so readily to the risk of mutilation and death, wherever the rulers of their country require it, for it is the redeeming feature of war that it brings out so much of this high patriotic devotion; but surely they are right who deem arbitration the better method of settling national differences; who call for a great disarmament of the European

nations, and would put a stop to the attitude of every great country shaking its fist in the face of its neighbours. What has become of the prophecy "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks"? Or the beautiful vision of Milton on the birth of the Saviour?—

> "No war, or battle's sound
> Was heard the world around;
> The idle spear and shield were high uphung;
> The hooked chariot stood
> Unstained with hostile blood,
> The trumpet spake not to the armed throng;
> And kings sat still with awful eye
> As if they surely knew their sovran Lord was by."

One lesson comes to us with pre-eminent force from the operations of war. The activity displayed by every good commander is a splendid example for all of us in spiritual warfare. "Joshua arose"; "Joshua lodged that night among the people"; "Joshua rose up early in the morning"; "Joshua went that night into the middle of the valley"; "Joshua drew not his hand back wherewith he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai." Such expressions show how intensely in earnest he was, how unsparing of himself, how vigilant and indefatigable in all that bore upon his enterprise. And generally we still see that, wherever military expeditions are undertaken, they are pushed forward with untiring energy, and the sinews of war are supplied in unstinted abundance, whatever grumbling there may be afterwards when the bill comes to be paid. Has the Christian Church ever girded herself for the great enterprise of conquering the world for Christ with the same zeal and determination? What are all the sums of money contributed for Christian missions, compared to those

spent annually on military and naval forces, and multiplied indefinitely when active war goes on! Alas, this question brings out but one result of a painful comparison—the contrast between the ardour with which secular results are pursued by secular men, and spiritual results by spiritual men. Let the rumour spread that gold or diamonds have been found at some remote region of the globe, what multitudes flock to them in the hope of possessing themselves of a share of the spoil! Not even the prospect of spending many days and nights in barbarism, amid the misery of dirt and heat and insects, and with company so rude and rough and reckless that they have hardly the appearance of humanity, can overcome the impetuous desire to possess themselves of the precious material, and come home rich. What crowds rush in when the prospectus of a profitable brewery promises an abundant dividend, earned too often by the manufactory of drunkards! What eager eyes scan the advertisements that tell you that if persons bearing a certain name, or related to one of that name, would apply at a certain address, they would hear of something to their advantage! Once we knew of a young man who had not even seen such an advertisement, but had been told that it had appeared. There was a vague tradition in his family that in certain circumstances a property would fall to them. The mere rumour that an advertisement had appeared in which he was interested set him to institute a search for it. He procured a file of the *Times* newspaper, reaching over a series of years, and eagerly scanned its advertisements. Failing to find there what he was in search of, he procured sets of other daily newspapers and subjected them to the same process. And thus he went on and on in his unwearied

search, till first he lost his situation, then he lost his reason, and then he lost his life. What will men not do to obtain a corruptible crown? Could it be supposed from *our* attitude and ardour that we are striving for the incorruptible? Could it be thought that the riches which we are striving to accumulate are not those which moth and rust do corrupt, but the treasures that endure for evermore? Surely "it is high time for us to awake out of sleep." Surely we ought to lay to heart that "the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Memorable are the poet's words respecting the great objects of human desire:—

> "The cloud-capt towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve:
> And like this unsubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind."

CHAPTER XVII.

EBAL AND GERIZIM.

JOSHUA viii. 30—35.

COMMENTATORS on Joshua have been greatly perplexed by the place which this narrative has in our Bibles. No one can study the map, and take into account the circumstances of Joshua and the people, without sharing in this perplexity. It will be observed from the map that Ebal and Gerizim, rising from the plain of Shechem, are a long way distant from Ai and Bethel. If we suppose Joshua and not his army only, but the whole of his people (ver. 33), to have gone straight from Gilgal to Mount Ebal after the capture of Ai, the journey must have occupied several days each way, besides the time needed for the ceremony that took place there. It certainly would have needed an overwhelming reason to induce him at such a time, first to march a host like this all the way to Mount Ebal, and then to march them back to their encampment at Gilgal. Hence many have come to believe that, in some way which we cannot explain, this passage has been inserted out of its proper place. The most natural place for it would be at the end of chap. xi. or chap. xii., after the conquest of the whole country, and before its division among the tribes. Nearly all the manuscripts of the Septuagint insert it between

vv. 2 and 3 of the ninth chapter, but this does not go far to remove the difficulty. It has been thought by some that Joshua left the original Gilgal in the plain of Jordan, and fixed his camp at another Gilgal, transferring the name of his first encampment to the second. Mention is certainly made in Scripture of another Gilgal in the neighbourhood of Bethel (2 Kings ii. 2), but nothing is said to lead us to suppose that Joshua had removed his encampment thither.

Some have thought that no record has been preserved of one of Joshua's great campaigns, the campaign in which he subdued the central part of the country. A good deal may be said for this supposition. In the list of the thirty-one kings whom he subdued over the country (chap. xii.) we find several whose dominions were in this region. For instance, we know that Aphek, Taanach, and Megiddo were all situated in the central part of the country, and probably other cities too. Yet, while the fact is recorded that they were defeated, no mention is made of any expedition against them. They belonged neither to the confederacy of Adonizedec in the south nor to that of Jabin in the north, and they must have been subdued on some separate occasion. It is just possible that Joshua defeated them before encountering the confederacy of Adonizedec at Gibeon and Bethhoron. But it is far more likely that it was after that victory that he advanced to the central part of the country.

On the whole, while admitting the perplexity of the question, we incline to the belief that the passage has been transferred from its original place. This in no way invalidates the authority of the book, or of the passage, for in the most undoubtedly authentic books of Scripture we have instances beyond question—very

notably in Jeremiah—of passages inserted out of their natural order.

It has been said that the passage in Deuteronomy (xxvii. 4-19) could not have been written by Moses, because he had never set foot in Canaan, and therefore could not have been acquainted with the names or the locality of Ebal and Gerizim. On the contrary, we believe that he had very good reason to be acquainted with both. For at the foot of Ebal lay the portion of ground which Jacob gave to his son Joseph, and where both Jacob's well and Joseph's tomb are pointed out at the present day. That piece of ground must have been familiar to Jacob, and carefully described to Joseph by its great natural features when he made it over to him. And as Joseph regarded it as his destined burial-place, the tradition of its situation must have been carefully transmitted to those that came after him, when he gave commandment concerning his bones. Joseph was not the oldest son of Jacob, any more than Rachel was his oldest wife, and for these reasons neither of them was buried in the cave of Machpelah. Moses therefore had good reasons for being acquainted with the locality. Probably it was at the time of the ceremony at Ebal that the bones of Joseph were buried, although the fact is not recorded till the very end of the book (Josh. xxiv. 32). But that passage, too, is evidently not in its natural place.

It was a most fitting thing that when he had completed the conquest of the country, Joshua should set about performing that great national ceremony, designed to rivet on the people's hearts the claims of God's law and covenant, which had been enjoined by Moses to be performed in the valley of Shechem. For though Joshua was neither priest nor prophet, yet as a warm

believer and earnest servant of God, he felt it his duty on all suitable occasions to urge upon the people that there was no prosperity for them save on condition of loyalty to Him. He sought to mingle the thought of God and of God's claims with the very life of the nation; to make it run, as it were, in their very blood; to get them to think of the Divine covenant as their palladium, the very pledge of all their blessings, their one only guarantee of prosperity and peace.

When therefore Joshua conducted his people to the Mounts Ebal and Gerizim, in order that they might have the obligations of the law set before them in a form as impressive as it was picturesque, he was not merely fulfilling mechanically an injunction of Moses, but performing a transaction into which he himself entered heart and soul. And when the writer of the book records the transaction, it is not merely for the purpose of showing us how certain acts prescribed in a previous book were actually performed, but for the purpose of perpetuating an occurrence which in the whole future history of the nation would prove either a continual inspiration for good, or a testimony against them, so that out of their own life they should be condemned. Knowing Joshua as we do, we can easily believe that all along it was one of his most cherished projects to implement the legacy of Moses, and superintend this memorable covenanting act. It must have been a great relief from the bloody scenes and awful experiences of war to assemble his people among the mountains, and engage them in a service which was so much more in harmony with the beauty and sublimity of nature. No critic or writer who has any sense of the fitness of things can coolly remove this transaction from the sphere of history into that of fancy, or deprive

Joshua of his share in a transaction into which his heart was doubtless thrown as enthusiastically as that of David in after times when the ark was placed upon Mount Zion.

It could not be without thrilling hearts that Joshua and all of his people who were like-minded entered the beautiful valley of Shechem, which had been the first resting-place in Canaan of their father Abraham, the first place where God appeared to him, and the first place where "he builded an altar unto the Lord" (Gen. xii. 6, 7). By general consent the valley of Shechem holds the distinction of being one of the most beautiful in the country. "Its western side," says Stanley, "is bounded by the abutments of two mountain ranges, running from west to east. These ranges are Gerizim and Ebal; and up the opening between them, not seen from the plain, lies the modern town of Nablous [Neapolis = Shechem]. . . . A valley green with grass, grey with olives, gardens sloping down on each side, fresh springs running down in all directions; at the end a white town embosomed in all this verdure, lodged between the two high mountains which extend on each side of the valley—that on the south Gerizim, that on the north Ebal;—this is the aspect of Nablous, the most beautiful, perhaps it might be said the only very beautiful spot in Central Palestine."

If the host of Israel approached Ebal and Gerizim from the south, they would pass along the central ridge or plateau of the country till they reached the vale of Shechem, where the mountain range would appear as if it had been cleft from top to bottom by some great convulsion of nature. Then, as now, the country was studded thickly with villages, the plains clothed with grass and grain, and the rounded hills with orchards of

fig, olive, pomegranate, and other trees. On either side of the fissure rose a hill of about eight hundred feet, about the height of Arthur Seat at Edinburgh, Ebal on the north and Gerizim on the south. It was not like the scene at Sinai, where the bare and desolate mountains towered up to heaven, their summits lost among the clouds. This was a more homely landscape, amid the fields and dwellings where the people were to spend their daily life. If the proclamation of the law from Sinai had something of an abstract and distant character, Ebal and Gerizim brought it home to the business and bosoms of men. It was now to be the rule for every day, and for every transaction of every day; the bride was now to be settled in her home, and if she was to enjoy the countenance and the company of her heavenly Bridegroom, the law of His house must be fully implemented, and its every requirement riveted on her heart.

The ceremony here under Joshua was twofold: first, the rearing of an altar; and second, the proclamation of the law.

1. The altar, as enjoined in Exod. xx. 24, was of whole, undressed stones. In its simple structure it was designed to show that the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands. In its open position it demonstrated that the most fitting place for His worship was not the secret recesses of the woods, but the open air and full light of heaven, seeing that He is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. On this altar were offered burnt offerings and peace offerings to the Lord. The sacrificial system had been little attended to amid the movements of the wilderness, and the warlike operations in which the people had been more or less engaged ever since their entrance on the land; but now was the beginning of a more regular worship.

The first transaction here performed was the sacrificial. Here sin was called to mind, and the need of propitiation. Here it was commemorated that God Himself had appointed a method of propitiation; that He had thereby signified His gracious desire to be at peace with His people; that He had not left them to sigh out, "Oh that we knew where we might find Him, that we might come even to His seat!"—but had opened to His people the gates of righteousness, that they might go in and praise the Lord.

Moreover, we read in Joshua, that "he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel." There is sufficient difference between the passages in Deuteronomy and Joshua to show that the one was not copied from the other. From Joshua we might suppose that it was on the stones of the altar that Joshua wrote, and there is no reference to the command given in Deuteronomy to plaister the stones with plaister. But from Deuteronomy it is plain that it was not the stones of the altar that were plaistered over, but memorial stones set up for the purpose. There has been no little controversy as to the manner in which this injunction was carried out. According to Dr. Thomson, in the "Land and the Book," the matter is very simple. The difficulty in the eyes of commentators has arisen from the idea that plaister is altogether too soft a substance to retain the impression of what is written on it. This Dr. Thomson wholly disputes: "A careful examination of Deut. xxvii. 4, 8 and Josh. viii. 30-32 will lead to the opinion that the law was written upon and in the plaister with which these pillars were coated. This could easily be done; and such writing was common in ancient times. I

have seen numerous specimens of it certainly more than two thousand years old, and still as distinct as when they were first inscribed upon the plaister. . . . In this hot climate, where there is no frost to dissolve the cement, it will continue hard and unbroken for thousands of years,—which is certainly long enough. The cement on Solomon's pools remains in admirable preservation, though exposed to all the vicissitudes of the climate and with no protection. . . . What Joshua did therefore, when he erected those great stones on Mount Ebal, was merely to write *in* the still soft cement with a style, or more likely *on* the polished surface when dry, with red paint, as in ancient tombs. If properly sheltered, and not broken by violence, they would have remained to this day."

Joshua could not have written the whole of the law on his pillars; it was probably only the ten commandments. As we shall see, another arrangement was made for the rehearsal of the whole law; it was solemnly read out afterwards. But now the entire nation, with all the strangers and followers, took up their position in the valley between the two mountains. Half of the tribes separated from the rest to the slopes of Gerizim, and the other half to those of Ebal. From Deuteronomy we gather that those who were grouped on Gerizim were far the more important and numerous tribes. They embraced Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin. On Mount Ebal were stationed Reuben, Gad and Asher, Zebulun, Dan and Naphtali. The priests stood between, and read out blessings and curses. When blessings were read out the tribes on Gerizim shouted Amen. When curses were read out those on Ebal did the same. Let us imagine the scene. A mountain side covered with people is always a pictur-

esque sight, and the effect is greatly heightened when the clothing of the multitude is of light, bright colours, as probably it was on this occasion. "It was," says Dr. Thomson, "beyond question or comparison the most august assembly the sun has ever shone upon; and I never stand in the narrow plain, with Ebal and Gerizim rising on either hand to the sky, without involuntarily recalling and reproducing the scene. I have shouted to hear the echo, and then fancied how it must have been when the loud-voiced Levites proclaimed from the naked cliffs of Ebal, 'Cursed is the man that maketh any graven image, an abomination to Jehovah.' And then the tremendous AMEN! tenfold louder from the united congregation, rising and swelling and re-echoing from Ebal to Gerizim, and from Gerizim to Ebal. AMEN! Even so, let him be accursed. No, there never was an assembly to compare with this."

Very explicit mention is made of the fact that "there was not a word of all that Moses commanded which Joshua read not before all the congregation of the children of Israel, with the women and the little ones and the strangers that were conversant among them." This obviously implies that the law of Moses was in definite form, and that the reading of it took up a considerable portion of time.

The order of events had been very significant. First, a great work of destruction—the dispossession of the Canaanites. Next, the erection of an altar, and the offering up of sacrifices. And, lastly, the inscribing and proclamation of the law. "The surgeon has done his duty, and now nature will proceed to heal and comfort and bless. The enemy has been driven off the field. Now the altar is put up and the law is promulgated. Society without law is chaos. An altar without right-

eousness is evaporative sentiment. Prayer without duty may be a detachment of the wings from the bird they were designed to assist. . . . Having done the destructive work, do not imagine that the whole programme is complete; now begins the construction of the altar. And having made a place for prayer, do not imagine that the whole duty of man has been perfected; next put up the law; battle, prayer, law; law, prayer, battle."[1]

If the conjecture that this passage originally occupied a later place in the book be correct, the army was now about to be disbanded, and the people were about to be settled in homes of their own. It was a momentous crisis. They were about to lose, in a great degree, the influence of union, and the presence of men like Joshua and the godly elders, whose noble example and stirring words had ever been a power for what was good and true. Scattered over the land, they would now be more at the control of their own hearts, and often of what in them was least noble and least godly. On the part of Joshua, everything had been done, by this solemn gathering, to secure that they should separate with the remembrance of God's mighty works on their behalf filling their hearts, and the words of God's law ringing in their ears.

[1] "The People's Bible," by Joseph Parker, D.D.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE STRATAGEM OF THE GIBEONITES.

JOSHUA ix.

WE now resume the thread of the story interrupted by the narrative of the transaction at Ebal and Gerizim. We learn from the testimony of Rahab of Jericho, as uttered to the spies (chap. ii. 9), that the terror of Israel had caused the hearts of the inhabitants of the country to faint, and that the fame of all that had been done for them by Jehovah had quite paralysed them. But when the host of Israel actually entered Western Palestine, and began their conquest by the destruction of Jericho and Ai, the inhabitants seem to have plucked up courage, and begun to consider what could be done in self-defence. It is very probable that they found considerable encouragement from what happened at Ai. There it had been seen that Israel was not invincible. Insignificant though Ai was, its people had been able to repel with great success the first attack of the Israelites. And though they had been destroyed in the second, this was achieved only by the combined influence of stratagem and an overwhelming force. The supernatural power under which Jericho had fallen had not been shown at Ai, and might not come into play in the future. There was therefore yet a chance for the Canaanites, if they should combine and act in

concert. Steps were therefore taken for such a union. The kings or chiefs who occupied the hills, or central plateau of the country; those of the valleys, interspersed between the mountains; and those occupying the Shephelah, or maritime plains of Philistia, Sharon, and Phœnicia;—all the nations comprised under the well-known names Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, entered into a league of defence, and prepared to confront Joshua and the Israelites with a determined resistance. The news of the confederacy would bring a tremor over some timid hearts in the camp of Israel, but would cause no serious anxiety to Joshua and all the men of faith, who, like him, felt assured that the Lord was with them.

There was one native community, however, that determined to follow another course. The Gibeonites were a branch of the Hivite race, inhabiting the town of Gibeon, and some other prominent towns in the great central plateau of the country. Gibeon is undoubtedly represented now by the village of El Jib, situated about half-way between Jerusalem and Bethel, four or five miles distant from each. Dr. Robertson describes El Jib as situated in a beautiful plain of considerable extent, on an oblong hill or ridge, composed of layers of limestone, rising as if by regular steps out of the plain. In the days of Joshua, it was a place of great importance, a royal city, and it had under its jurisdiction the towns of Beeroth, Chephirah, and Kirjath-jearim. Its inhabitants were in no humour to fight with Joshua. They had faith enough to understand what would be the inevitable result of that, and therein they were right, and the confederate kings were wrong. On the other hand, they were not prepared to make an honest and unconditional surrender. They probably knew that

the orders under which Joshua was acting called on him to destroy all the people of the land, and they had no assurance that, being of the doomed nations, open submission would secure their lives. They resolved therefore to proceed by stratagem. A detachment was appointed to wait on Joshua at his camp at Gilgal, as if they were ambassadors from a distant country, and represent to him in pious tone that they had come from afar, "because of the name of the Lord his God, having heard the fame of Him, and all that He did in Egypt, and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites that were beyond Jordan, to Sihon King of Heshbon, and to Og King of Bashan." They came with the desire to show respect to the people whose God was so powerful, and to be allowed, though far off, to live at peace with them. Then they presented their credentials, as it were; showing the old sacks, the shrivelled bottles, the musty bread they had brought with them, and the clouts upon their feet and ragged garments which attested the great length of their journey. "Those old Gibeonites," says the "Land and the Book," "did indeed 'work wilily' with Joshua. Nothing could be better calculated to deceive than their devices. I have often thought that their ambassadors, as described in the narrative, furnish one of the finest groups imaginable for a painter; with their old sacks on their poor asses; their wine bottles of goat skin, patched and shrivelled up in the sun, old, rent, and bound up; old shoes and clouted upon their feet; old garments, ragged and bedraggled, with bread dry and mouldy,—the very picture of an over-travelled and wearied caravan from a great distance. It is impossible to transfer to paper the ludicrous appearance of such a company. No wonder that, having tasted their mouldy victuals, and

looked upon their soiled and travel-worn costume, Joshua and the elders were deceived, especially as they did not wait to ask counsel at the mouth of the Lord."

It was just the completeness of the disguise that threw Joshua and the men of Israel off their guard. For at first the idea did occur to them that the strangers might be neighbours, and therefore of the nations that they were called on to destroy. On closer inspection, however, that seemed out of the question; indeed, the supposition was so utterly preposterous that it was deemed hardly fitting to bring the matter before the Lord. It is as plain as day, Joshua and the elders would reason; the evidence of what they say is beyond question; theirs is no case of perplexity requiring us to go to God; we may surely exercise our common sense and make a league with these far-travelled men. In a short time they will be back in their own country, far beyond our boundaries, and the only effect of their visit and of our league will be a fresh tribute to the name and power of Jehovah, a fresh testimony to His presence with us, and a fresh pledge that He will bear us to success in the enterprise in which we are engaged. And when the confederate kings that are now leaguing against us hear that this distant people have come to us to propitiate our favour, they will be struck by a new terror and will be the more easily subdued.

We see in all this the simple, unsuspecting spirit of men who have spent their lives in the wilderness. As for the Gibeonites, there was a combination of good and bad in their spirit. They remind us in a measure of the woman with the issue of blood. In her there was certainly faith; but along with the faith, extraordinary superstition. In the Gibeonites there was faith—a belief that Israel was under the protection of a remark-

able Divine power, under a Divine promise the truth of which even Balaam had very recently acknowledged —"I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee." Undoubtedly a religious feeling lay at the bottom of the proceeding. A great divine Being was seen to be involved, who was on Israel's side and against his enemies, and it would not do to trifle with Him. But in their way of securing exemption from the effects of His displeasure, the grossest superstition appeared. They were to gain their object by deceit. They were to get Him to favour them above their neighbours through an elaborate system of fraud, through a tissue of lies, through unmitigated falsehood. What a strange conception of God! What blindness to His highest attributes,—His holiness and His truth! What amazing infatuation to suppose that they could secure His blessing through acts fitted to provoke His utmost displeasure! What a miserable God men fashion to themselves when they simply invest Him with almighty power, or perhaps suppose Him to be moved by whims and prejudices and favouritisms like frail man, but omit to clothe Him with His highest glory—forget that "justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne, mercy and truth go before His face."

The conduct of the men was the more strange that it was impossible that they should not be speedily found out. And it was quite possible that, when found out, they would be dealt with more severely than ever. True, indeed, Joshua, when he did detect their plot, did not so act; he acted on a high, perhaps a mistaken sense of honour; but they had no right to count on that. Timidity is a poor adviser. All it can do is to turn the next corner. True faith, resting on eternal

truth, acts for eternity. True faith is often blind, but in the deepest darkness it knows that it is on the right track, and under the guidance of the eternal light. Blind faith is very different from blind fear. Faith holds on in full expectation of deliverance; fear trembles and stumbles, in perpetual dread of exposure and humiliation.

"A lying tongue is but for a moment;" and the Gibeonite fraud lived just three days. Then it was discovered by Joshua that the Gibeonites lived in the immediate neighbourhood. But before that, he had made peace with them, and entered into a league to let them live, and the princes of the congregation had confirmed it by an oath. Nothing could have been more provoking than to discover that they had been duped and swindled. It is always a very bitter experience to find that our confidence has been misplaced. Men whom we thought trustworthy, and whom we commended to others as trustworthy, have turned out knaves. It is hard to bear, for we have committed ourselves to our friends in the matter. What would Joshua and his people think now of the supposed tribute to the God of Israel, and the impression expected to be made on the confederate kings? Before all the inhabitants of Canaan he and his people were befooled, humiliated. Not a man in all the country but would be making merry at their expense. Yet even that was not the worst of it. They had been guilty of over-confidence, and of neglect of means that were in their hands; they had neglected to get counsel of their God. They had trusted in their own hearts when they ought to have sought guidance from above. The trouble was their own creation; they were alone to blame.

We cannot but respect the way in which Joshua and

the princes acted when they discovered the fraud. It might have been competent to repudiate the league on the ground that it was agreed to by them under false pretences. It was made on the representation that the Gibeonites had come from a far country, and when that was seen to be utterly untrue there would have been an honourable ground for repudiating the transaction. But Joshua did not avail himself of this loophole. He and the princes had such respect for the sanctity of an oath that, even when they discovered that they had been grossly deceived, they would not resile from it. It seems to have been the princes that took up this ground, and they did so in opposition to the congregation (ver. 18). The fact that the name of the Lord God of Israel had been invoked in the oath sworn to the Gibeonites constrained them to abide by the transaction. It is a good sign of their spirit that they were so jealous of the honour of their God, and of the sanctity of their oath. They came out of the transaction with more honour than we should have expected. Personal interests were subordinated to higher considerations. They carried out that great canon of true religion —first and foremost giving "glory to God in the highest."

But though the lives of the Gibeonites were spared, that was all. They were to be reduced to a kind of slavery—to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and the altar of God." The expression has become a household word to denote a life of drudgery, but perhaps we fail to recognise the full significance of the terms. "I was forcibly reminded of this," says the author of "The Land and the Book," "by long files of women and children (near El Jib) carrying on their heads heavy bundles of wood. . . .

It is the severest kind of drudgery, and my compassion has often been enlisted in behalf of the poor women and children, who daily bring loads of wood to Jerusalem from these very mountains of the Gibeonites. To carry water, also, is very laborious and fatiguing. The fountains are far off, in deep wadies with steep banks, and a thousand times have I seen the feeble and the young staggering up long and weary ways with large jars of water on their heads. It is the work of slaves, and of the very poor, whose condition is still worse. Among the pathetic lamentations of Jeremiah there is nothing more affecting than this: 'They took the young men to grind, and the children fell under the wood' (i. 16). Grinding at the hand-mill is a low, menial work, assigned to female slaves, and therefore utterly humiliating to the young men of Israel. And the delicate children of Zion falling under the loads of hard, rough wood, along the mountain paths! Alas! 'for these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me: my children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed.'"

Respecting the after history of Gibeon and the Gibeonites we find some notices in the Old Testament, but none in the New. At one time there was a sanctuary at Gibeon, even after the ark had been removed to Mount Zion; for it was at Gibeon that Solomon offered his great sacrifice of a thousand burnt offerings, and had that remarkable dream in which, in reply to the Divine offer of a choice of gifts, he chose wisdom in preference to any other (1 Kings iii. 4 *sq.*). But the most remarkable reappearance of the Gibeonites in history is in the reigns of Saul and David. For some unknown reason, and probably quite unjustly, Saul had

put some of them to death. And in the reign of David, probably the early part of it, when a succession of famines desolated the land, and inquiry was made as to the cause, the reply of the oracle was: "It is for Saul and his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites." And it was to avenge this unjust slaughter that seven descendants of Saul were put to death, on that occasion when Rizpah, the mother of two of them, showed such remarkable affection by guarding their dead bodies from the beasts and birds of prey. It is possible that even after the Babylonian captivity some Gibeonites survived under their old name, because it is said in Nehemiah that among the others who repaired the wall of Jerusalem were "Melatiah the Gibeonite, and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon, and of Mizpah" (iii. 7). Only it is uncertain whether Melatiah was of the old Gibeonite stock, or an Israelite who had Gibeon for his city. While the old Gibeonites did survive they seem to have had a miserable lot, and the question might have been often asked by them—Did our fraud bring us any real good? Is life worth living?

Does anything resembling this fraud of the Gibeonites ever take place among ourselves? In answer, let us ask first of all, what is the meaning of pious frauds? Are they not transactions where fraud is resorted to in order to accomplish what are supposed to be religious ends? Granting that the fraud of the Gibeonites was not for a religious but for a secular object—their deliverance from the sword of Joshua—still they professed, in practising it, to be doing honour to God. It is the part of superstition at once to lower the intellectual and the moral attributes of God. It often represents that the most frivolous acts, the uttering of mysterious words,

or the performance of senseless acts have such a power over God as to bring about certain desired results. More frequently it holds that cruelty, falsehood, injustice, and other crimes, if brought to bear on religious or ecclesiastical ends, are pleasing in God's sight. Is there anything more truly odious than this severance of religion from morality and humanity,—this representation that fraud and other immoral acts have value before God? How can anything be a real religious gain to a man, how can it be otherwise than disastrous in the last degree, if it develops a fraudulent spirit, if it perverts his moral nature, if it deepens and intensifies the moral disorder of his heart? If men saw "the beauty of holiness," "the beauty of the Lord," they could never bring their minds to such miserable distortions. It is pure blasphemy to suppose that God could thus demean Himself. It is self-degradation to imagine that anything that can be gained by oneself through such means, could make up for what is lost, or for the guilt incurred by such wickedness.

And this suggests a wider thought—the fearful miscalculation men make whensoever they resort to fraud in the hope of reaping benefit by means of it. Yet what practice is more common? The question is, Does it really pay? Does it pay, for instance, to cheat at cards? Have we not seen recently what swift and terrible retribution that may bring, making us feel for the culprit as we might have felt for Cain. Does it pay the merchant to cheat as to the quality of his goods? Does it not leak out that he is not to be trusted, and does not that suspicion lose more to him in the long run than it gains? Does it pay the preacher to preach another man's sermon as his own? Or, to vary the illustration. When one has entrapped a maiden under

false promises, and then forsakes her; or when he conceals the fact that he is already married to another; or when he controls himself for a time, to conceal from her his ill temper, or his profligate habits, or his thirst for strong drink, does it pay in the end? The question is not, Does he succeed in his immediate object? but, How does the matter end? Is it a comfortable thought to any man that he has broken a trustful heart, that he has brought misery to a happy home, that he has filled some one's life with lamentation and mourning and woe? We are not thinking only of the future life, when so many wrongs will be brought to light, and so many men and women will have to curse the infatuation that made fraud their friend and evil their good. We think of the present happiness of those who live in an atmosphere of fraud, and worship daily at its shrine. Can such disordered souls know aught of real peace and solid joy? In the case of some of them, are there not occasional moments of sober feeling, when they think what their life was given them for, and contrast their selfish and heartless devices with the career of those who deal truly and live to do good? Bitter, very bitter is the feeling which the contrast raises. It is bitter to think how unfit one is for the society of honest men; how the master one is serving is the father of lies; and how, even when the master does grant one a momentary success, it is at the sacrifice of all self-respect and conscious purity, and with a dark foreboding of wrath in the life to come.

All Eastern nations get the character of being deceitful; but indeed the weed may be said to flourish in every soil where it has not been rooted out by living Christianity. But if it be peculiarly characteristic of Eastern nations, is it not remarkable how constantly it

is rebuked in the Bible, even though that book sprang from an Eastern soil? No doubt the record of the Bible abounds with *instances* of deceit, but its voice is always against them. And its instances are always instructive. Satan gained nothing by deceiving our first parents. Jacob was well punished for deceiving Isaac. David's misleading of the high priest when he fled from Saul involved ultimately the slaughter of the whole priestly household. Ananias and Sapphira had an awful experience when they lied unto the Holy Ghost. All through the Bible it is seen that lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but they that deal truly are His delight. And when our blessed Lord comes to show us the perfect life, how free He is from the slightest taint or vestige of deceit! How beautifully transparent is His whole life and character! No little child with his honest smile and open face was ever more guileless. In the light of that perfect example, who among us does not blush for our errors—for our many endeavours to conceal what we have done, to appear better than we were, to seem to be pleasing God when we were pleasing ourselves, or to be aiming at God's glory when we were really consulting for our own interests? Is it possible for us ever to be worthy of such a Lord? First, surely, we must go to His cross, and, bewailing all our unworthiness, seek acceptance through His finished work. And then draw from His fulness, even grace for grace; obtain through the indwelling of His Spirit that elixir of life which will send a purer life-blood through our souls, and assimilate us to Him of whom His faithful apostle wrote: "He did not sin, *neither was guile found in His mouth.*"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BATTLE OF BETHHORON.

JOSHUA X.

OUT of the larger confederacy of the whole Canaanite chiefs against Joshua and his people recorded in the beginning of chap. ix., a smaller number, headed by Adonizedec, undertook the special task of chastising the Gibeonites, who had not only refused to join the confederacy, but, as it was thought, basely and treacherously surrendered to Joshua. It is interesting to find the King of Jerusalem, Adonizedec, bearing a name so similar to that of Melchizedek, King of Salem, in the days of Abraham. No doubt, since the days of Jerome, there have been some who have denied that the Salem of Melchizedek was Jerusalem. But the great mass of opinion is in favour of the identity of the two places. Melchizedek means King of Righteousness; Adonizedec, Lord of Righteousness; in substance the same. It was a striking name for a ruler, and it was remarkable that it should have been kept up so long, although in the time of Adonizedec its significance had probably been forgotten. Jerusalem was but five miles south of Gibeon; the other four capitals, whose chiefs joined in the expedition, were farther off. Hebron, eighteen miles south of Jerusalem, was memorable in patriarchal history as the dwelling-place of

Abraham and the burial-place of his family; Jarmuth, hardly mentioned in the subsequent history, is now represented by Yarmuk, six miles from Jerusalem; Lachish, of which we have frequent mention in Scripture, is probably represented by Um Lakis, about fifteen miles south-west of Jerusalem; and Eglon by Ajlan, a little farther west. The five little kingdoms embraced most of the territory afterwards known as the tribe of Judah, and they must have been far more than a match for Gibeon. Their chiefs are called "the five Amorite kings," but this does not imply that they were exclusively of the Amorite race, for "Amorite," like "Canaanite," is often used generically to denote the whole inhabitants (as in Gen. xv. 16). The five chiefs were so near Gibeon that it was quite natural for them to undertake this expedition. No doubt they reckoned that, by making a treaty with Joshua, the Gibeonites had strengthened his hands and weakened those of his opponents; they had made resistance to Joshua more difficult for the confederacy, and therefore they deserved to be chastised. To turn their arms against Gibeon, when they had Joshua to deal with, was probably an unwise proceeding; but to their resources it would seem a very easy task. Gibeon enjoyed nothing of that aid from a great unseen Power that made Joshua so formidable; little could they have dreamt that Joshua would come to the assistance of his new allies, and with God's help inflict on them a crushing defeat. "The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought, He maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations."

The case was very serious for the Gibeonites. As Gibeon lay so near Jerusalem and the cities of the other

confederates, it is likely that the appearance of the enemy before its walls was the first, or nearly the first, intimation of the coming attack. In their extremity they sent to Joshua imploring help, and the terms in which they besought him not to lose a moment, but come to them at his utmost speed, show the urgency of their danger. To appeal to Joshua at all after their shameful fraud was a piece of presumption, unless—and this is very unlikely—the treaty between them had promised protection from enemies. Had Joshua been of a mean nature he would have chuckled over their distress, and congratulated himself that now he would get rid of these Gibeonites without trouble on his part. But the same generosity that had refused to take advantage of their fraud when it was detected showed itself in this their time of need. Joshua was encamped at Gilgal on the banks of the Jordan; for the arguments that suppose him to have been at another Gilgal are not consistent with the terms used in the narrative (*e.g.*, ver. 9, "*went up* from Gilgal all night"). From Gilgal to Gibeon the distance is upwards of twenty miles, and a great part of the way is steep and difficult.

Encouraged by the assurance of Divine protection and favoured by the moonlight, Joshua, by a marvellous act of pluck and energy, went up by night, reached Gibeon in the morning, fell upon the army of the assembled kings, possibly while it was yet dark, and utterly discomfited them. It would have been natural for the routed armies to make for Jerusalem, only five miles off, by the south road, but either Joshua had occupied that road, or it was too difficult for a retreat. The way by which they did retreat, running west from Gibeon, is carefully described. First they took the way "that goeth up to Bethhoron." As soon as they had

traversed the plain of Gibeon, they ascended a gentle slope leading towards Bethhoron the upper, then fled down the well-known pass, through the two Bethhorons, upper and nether, making for Jarmuth, Lachish, and other towns at the bottom of the hills. In the course of their descent a hailstorm overtook them, one of those terrific storms which seem hardly credible to us, but are abundantly authenticated both in ancient and modern times, and "they which died with hailstones were more than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword." The Israelites, exhausted, no doubt, with their night march and morning exertions, seem to have been outstripped by the flying army, and in this way to have escaped the shower of hail. By the time the five kings, who had had to fly on foot, reached Makkedah at the foot of the mountains, they were unable to go farther and hid themselves in a cave. As Joshua passed he was informed of this, but, unwilling to stop the pursuit of the fugitives, he ordered large stones to be rolled to the door of the cave, locking the kings up as it were in a prison, and no doubt leaving a guard in charge. Then, when the pursuit had been carried to the very gates of the walled cities, he returned to the cave. The five kings were brought out, and the chiefs of the Israelite army put their feet upon their necks. The kings were slain, and their bodies hanged on trees till the evening.

Thereafter Joshua attacked the chief cities of the confederates, and took in succession Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, Hebron, and Debir. Nothing is said of his taking Jerusalem; indeed it appears from the after history that the stronghold of Jerusalem on Mount Zion remained in Jebusite hands up to the time of David. Many of the inhabitants were able to escape destruction, but substantially Joshua was now in possession

of the whole southern division of the land, from the Jordan on the east to the borders of the Philistines on the west, and from Gibeon on the north to the wilderness on the south. It does not appear, however, that he retained full possession; while he was occupied in other parts of the country the people returned and occupied their cities. The clemency of Joshua in not destroying the inhabitants proved the source of much future trouble.

In all the subsequent history of the country, the victory of Gibeon was looked back on, and justly, as one of the most memorable that had ever been known. For promptitude, dash, and daring it was never eclipsed by any event of the kind; while the strength of the confederate army, the completeness of its defeat, and the picturesqueness of the whole situation constantly supplied materials for wonder and delight. Moreover, the hand of God had been conspicuously shown in more ways than one. The hailstorm that wrought such havoc was ascribed to His friendly hand, but a far more memorable token of His interest and support lay in the miracle that arrested the movements of the sun and the moon, in order that victorious Israel might have time to finish his work. And after the victory the capture of the fortified towns became comparatively easy. The remnant that had escaped could have no heart to defend them. Joshua must have smiled at the fate of the "cities walled up to heaven" that had so greatly distressed his brother spies when they came up to examine the land. And as he found them one by one yield to his army, as though their defence had really departed from them, he must have felt with fresh gratitude the faithfulness and lovingkindness of the Lord, and earnestly breathed the prayer that neither

his faith nor that of his people might ever fail until the whole campaign was brought to an end.

In some respects this victory had a special significance. In the first place, it had a most important bearing on the success of the whole enterprise; its suddenness, its completeness, its manifold grandeur being admirably fitted to paralyse the enemy in other parts of the country, and open the whole region to Joshua. By some it has been compared to the battle of Marathon, not only on account of the suddenness with which the decisive blow was struck, but also on account of the importance of the interests involved. It was a battle for freedom, for purity, for true religion, in opposition to tyranny, idolatry, and abominable sensuality; for all that is wholesome in human life, in opposition to all that is corrupt; for all that makes for peaceful progress, in opposition to all that entails degradation and misery. The prospects of the whole world were brighter after that victory of Bethhoron. The relation of heaven to earth was more auspicious, and more full of promise for the days to come. Had any hitch occurred in the arrangements; had Israel halted half-way up the eastern slopes, and the troops of Adonizedec driven them back; had the tug of war in the plain of Gibeon proved too much for them after their toilsome night march; had no hailstorm broken out on the retreating enemy; had he been able to form again at the western foot of the hills and arrest the progress of Joshua in pursuit, the whole enterprise would have had a different complexion. No doubt the Divine arm might have been stretched out for Israel in some other way; but the remarkable thing was, that no such supplementary mode of achieving the desired result was required. At every point the success of Israel was

complete, and every obstacle opposed to him by the enemy was swept away for the time being as smoke before the wind.

In the next place, the tokens of Divine aid were very impressive. After the experience which Joshua had had of the consequences of failing to ask God for direction when first the Gibeonites came to him, we may be very sure that on the present occasion he would be peculiarly careful to seek Divine counsel. And he was well rewarded. For "the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies." It does not need to be said that this miraculous incident has from first to last given birth to an immensity of perplexity and discussion. It will be observed that the record of it does not come in as part of the narrative, but as a quotation from a pre-existing book. Concerning that book we know very little. From its name, Jashar, "The upright," we may believe it to have been a record of memorable deeds of righteous men. In form it was poetical, the extract in the present case being of that rhythmical structure which was the mark of Hebrew poetry. The only other occasion on which it is mentioned is in connection with the song composed by David, after the death of Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam. i. 18). "David" (as the Revised Version puts it) "bade them teach the children of Israel the song of the bow; behold, it is written in the book of Jashar." As to the origin and nature of this book we can only conjecture. It may have been a public record, contributed to from time to time by various writers, under conditions and arrangements which at this distance of time, and under the obscurity of the whole subject, we cannot ascertain.

Then as to the miracle of the sun and the moon standing still. It is well known that this was one of the passages brought forward by the Church of Rome to condemn Galileo, when he affirmed that the earth and the moon revolved round the sun, and that it was not the motion of the sun round the earth, but the rotation of the earth on her own axis that produced the change of day and night. No one would dream now of making use of this passage for any such purpose. Whatever theory of inspiration men may hold, it is admitted universally that the inspired writers used the popular language of the day in matters of science, and did not anticipate discoveries which were not made till many centuries later. That expressions occur in Scripture which are not in accord with the best established conclusions of modern science would never be regarded by any intelligent person as an argument against the Scriptures as the inspired records of God's will, designed especially to reveal to us the way of life and salvation through Jesus Christ, and to be an infallible guide to us on all that "man is to believe concerning God, and the duty that God requires of man."

A far more serious question has been raised as to whether this miracle ever occurred, or could have occurred. To those who believe in the possibility of miracles, it can be no conclusive argument that it could not have occurred without producing injurious consequences the end of which can hardly be conceived. For if the rotation of the earth on its axis was suddenly arrested, all human beings on its surface, and all loose objects whatever must have been flung forward with prodigious violence; just as, on a small scale, on the sudden stoppage of a carriage, we find ourselves thrown forward, the motion of the carriage having been communicated

to our bodies. But really this is a paltry objection; for surely the Divine power that can control the rotation of the earth is abundantly able to obviate such effects as these. We can understand the objection that God, having adjusted all the forces of nature, leaves them to operate by themselves in a uniform way without disturbance or interference; but we can hardly comprehend the reasonableness of the position that if it is His pleasure miraculously to modify one arrangement, he is unable to adjust all relative arrangements, and make all conspire harmoniously to the end desired.

But was it a miracle? The narrative, as we have it, implies not only that it was, but that there was something in it stupendous and unprecedented. It comes in as a part of that supernatural process in which God had been engaged ever since the deliverance of His people from Egypt, and which was to go on till they should be finally settled in the land. It naturally joins on to the miraculous division of the Jordan, and the miraculous fall of the walls of Jericho. We must remember that the work in which God was now engaged was one of peculiar spiritual importance and significance. He was not merely finding a home for His covenant people; He was making arrangements for advancing the highest interests of humanity; He was guarding against the extinction on earth of the Divine light which alone could guide man in safety through the life that now is, and in preparation for that which is to come. He was taking steps to prevent a final and fatal severance of the relation between God and man, and He was even preparing the way for a far more complete and glorious development of that relation—to be seen in the person of His Incarnate Son, the spiritual Joshua, and made possible for men through that great

work of propitiation which He was to accomplish on the cross. Who will take upon him to say that at an important crisis in the progress of the events which were to prepare the way for this grand consummation, it was not fitting for the Almighty to suspend for a time even the ordinances of heaven, in order that a day's work, carrying such vast consequences, might not be interrupted before its triumphant close?

There are commentators worthy of high respect who have thought that the fact of this incident being noticed in the form of a quotation from the Book of Jashar somewhat diminishes the credit due to it. It looks as if it had not formed part of the original narrative, but had been inserted by a subsequent editor from a book of poetry, expressed with poetic licence, and perhaps of later date. They are disposed to regard the words of Joshua, "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon," as a mere expression of his desire that the light would last long enough to allow the decisive work of the day to be brought to a thorough conclusion. They look on it as akin to the prayer of Agamemnon ("Iliad," ii. 412 *sq.*) that the sun might not go down till he had sacked Troy; and the form of words they consider to be suited to poetical composition, like some of the expressions in the eighteenth psalm—"There went up a smoke out of His nostrils, and fire out of His mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also, and did come down: He rode upon a cherub, and did fly."

But whatever allowance we may make for poetical licence of speech, it is hardly possible not to perceive that the words as they stand imply a miracle of extraordinary sublimity; nor do we see any sufficient ground for resisting the common belief that in whatsoever way

it was effected, there was a supernatural extension of the period of light, to allow Joshua to finish his work.[1]

One other notable feature in the transaction of this day was the completeness of the defeat inflicted by Joshua on the enemy. This defeat went on in successive stages from early morning till late at night. First, there was the slaughter in the plain of Gibeon. Then the havoc produced by the hail and by Joshua on the retreating army. Then the destruction caused as Joshua followed the enemy to their cities. And the work of the day was wound up by the execution of the five kings. Moreover, there followed a succession of similar scenes at the taking and sacking of their cities. When we try to realize all this in detail, we are confronted with a terrible scene of blood and death, and possibly we may find ourselves asking, Was there a particle of humanity in Joshua, that he was capable of such a series of transactions? Certainly Joshua was a great soldier, and a great religious soldier, but he was in many ways like his time. He had many of the qualities of Oriental commanders, and one of these qualities has ever been to carry slaughter to the utmost limit that the occasion allows. His treatment of the conquered kings, too, was marked by characteristic Oriental barbarity, for he caused his captains to put their feet upon their necks, needlessly embittering

[1] It seems hardly necessary to notice an explanation of the phenomenon that has been made lately—to the effect that it was in the morning, not the evening of the day, that Joshua expressed his wish. It was to prevent the allied kings about Gibeon knowing of his approach that he desired the sun to delay his rising in the east, a desire which was virtually fulfilled by that dark, cloudy condition of the sky which precedes a thunderstorm. The natural sense of the narrative admits neither of this explanation of the time nor of the miracle itself.

their dying moments, and he exposed their dead bodies to the needless humiliation of being hanged on a tree. But it must be said, and said firmly for Joshua, that there is no evidence of his acting on this or on other such occasions in order to gratify personal feelings; it was not done either to gratify a thirst for blood, or to gratify the pride of a conqueror. Joshua all through gives us the impression of a man carrying out the will of another; inflicting a judicial sentence, and inflicting it thoroughly at the first so that there might be no need for a constant series of petty executions afterwards. This certainly was his aim; but the enemy showed themselves more vital than he had supposed.

And when we turn to ourselves and think what we may learn from this transaction, we see a valuable application of his method to the spiritual warfare. God has enemies still, within and without, with whom we are called to contend. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." When we are fighting with the enemy within our own hearts leniency is our great temptation, but at the same time our greatest snare. What we need here is, courage to slay. We content ourselves with confessions and regrets, but the enemy lives, returns to the attack, and keeps us in perpetual discomfort. Oh that in this battle we resembled Joshua, aiming at killing the enemy outright, and leaving nothing belonging to him that breathes!

And in reference to the outside world, want of thoroughness in warfare is still our besetting sin. We play at missions; we trifle with the awful drunkenness and sensuality around us; we look on, and we

see rural districts gradually depopulated; and we wring our hands at the mass of poverty, vice, and misery in our great crowded cities. How rare is it for any one to arise among us like General Booth, to face prevailing evils in all their magnitude, and even attempt to do battle with them along the whole line! Why should not such a spirit be universal in the Christian Church? Who can tell the evil done by want of faith, by languor, by unwillingness to be disturbed in our quiet, self-indulged life, by our fear of rousing against us the scorn and rage of the world? If only the Church had more faith, and, as the fruit of faith, more courage and more enterprise, what help from heaven might not come to her! True, she would not see the enemy crushed by hailstones, nor the sun standing in Gibeon, nor the moon in the valley of Ajalon; but she would see grander sights; she would see men of spiritual might raised up in her ranks; she would see tides of strong spiritual influence overwhelming her enemies. Jerichos dismantled, Ais captured, and the champions of evil falling like Lucifer from heaven to make way for the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Let us go to the cross of Jesus to revive our faith and recruit our energies. The Captain of our salvation has not only achieved salvation for us, but He has set us a blessed example of the spirit and life of true Christian warriors.

"At the Name of Jesus
Satan's legions flee;
On then, Christian soldiers,
On to victory.
Hell's foundations quiver
At the shout of praise;
Brothers, lift your voices,
Loud your anthems raise!

CHAPTER XX.

THE BATTLE OF MEROM.

JOSHUA xi., xii.

THERE is some appearance of confusion in the terms in which the great confederacy of native princes against Israel is brought in. In the beginning of the ninth chapter, a combination that embraced the whole country, north and south, east and west, is described as gathered together to fight with Joshua and with Israel. Nothing more is said till after the treaty with the Gibeonites, when five of these confederate kings residing in the south not far from Gibeon muster their forces to besiege that city. Of the utter rout and ruin of these five kings and of some of their neighbours we have just been reading. And now we read that, after these things, Jabin, King of Hazor, sent to his neighbours, and to all the princes in the northern part of the country, and organized a combined movement against Israel, for which the appointed rendezvous was at the waters of Merom, in the extreme north of the country. The statement at the beginning of the ninth chapter that the confederates "gathered themselves together," seems to be made proleptically; the actual gathering together not having taken place till the occasions specified in the tenth and eleventh chapters respectively. The plan of the con-

federacy was no doubt formed soon after the fall of Jericho and Ai, and the arrangements for a vast united movement began to be made then. But it would necessarily consume a considerable time to bring so vast a host together. Meanwhile, another event had taken place. The Gibeonites had refused to join the confederacy and had made peace with Joshua. Their neighbours were intensely provoked, especially Adonizedec of Jerusalem, and without waiting for the general movement proceeded at once to chastise their treachery. As we have said already, they doubtless thought it would be an easy task. To the surprise of them all, Joshua, with an activity which they could not have looked for, hastened to the relief of Gibeon, and inflicted a defeat on the confederates which amounted to absolute ruin.

It has not been generally noticed how remarkably the Gibeonite fraud, and the honourable action of Joshua in connection with it, tended in the end to the good of Israel. Had Joshua, after the discovery of the fraud, repudiated his treaty and attacked and exterminated the Gibeonites, or had he disregarded their appeal to him for help and suffered them to be crushed by Adonizedec, there would have been nothing to hinder the southern kings from uniting with the northern, and thus presenting to Joshua the most formidable opposition that was ever mustered in defence of a country. The magnificent exploit of Joshua in the plain of Gibeon, down the pass of Bethhoron, and in the valley of Ajalon entirely frustrated any such arrangement. The armies of the southern kings were destroyed or demoralized. And though the united forces in the north, with their vast resources of war, still formed a most formidable opponent, the case would

have been very different if the two had combined, or if one of them had hung on Joshua's rear while he was engaged in front with the other. Nothing could have fallen out more for the advantage of Israel than the procedure of the Gibeonites, which drew off so large and powerful a section of the confederates, and exposed them thus separate to the sword of Joshua.

Joshua was not allowed a long rest at Gilgal after his dealings with Adonizedec and his brethren. No doubt the news of that tremendous disaster would quicken the energies of the northern kings. The head of the new conspiracy was Jabin, King of Hazor. Jabin was evidently an official name borne by the chief ruler of Hazor, like Pharaoh in Egypt, for when, at a subsequent period, the place has recovered somewhat of its importance, and comes again into view as a Canaanite capital, Jabin is again the name of its chief ruler (Judg. iv. 2).

The situation of Hazor has been disputed by geographers, and Robinson, who is usually so accurate, differs from other authorities. He assigns it to a ruinous city on a hill called Tell Khuraibeh, overhanging the Lake Merom, for little other reason than that it seems to answer the conditions of the various narratives where Hazor is introduced. On the other hand, the author of "The Land and the Book" assigns it to a place still called Hazere, a little west of Merom, the remains of which lie in a large natural basin, and spread far up the hill, toward the south. "Heaps of hewn stone, old and rotten; open pits, deep wells, and vast cisterns cut in the solid rock—these are the unequivocal indications of an important city. . . . I inquired of an old sheikh what saint was honoured there. In a voice loud and bold, as if to make a doubtful point

certain, he replied, Neby Hazûr, who fought with Yeshua Ibn Nun." The matter is of no great moment; all that it is important to know is that Hazor was situated near Lake Merom, and was the capital of a powerful kingdom.

The cities of some of the other confederates are named, but it is not easy to identify them all. The sites of Madon, Shimron, and Achshaph, are unknown, but they were apparently not far from Hazor. "The Arabah south of Chinneroth" (ver. 2, R.V.) denotes the plain of Jordan south of the lake of Galilee; the valley, or "lowland" (R.V.), denotes the maritime plain from the Philistines northward; "the heights of Dor on the west" (R.V.), or Highlands of Dor ("Speaker's Commentary"), the hills about a city on the sea coast, near the foot of Carmel, prominent in after history, but now reduced to a village with a few poor houses. The sacred historian, however, does not attempt to enumerate all the places from which the confederacy was drawn, and falls back on the old comprehensive formula—"Canaanites on the east and on the west, Amorites, Hittites, the Jebusites in the hill country, and the Hivite under Hermon in the land of Mizpeh." "The Canaanites on the west" embraced the people of Zidon, for Joshua is expressly stated to have followed a band of the fugitives to that city (ver. 8). The muster must have been an extraordinary one, as numerous "as the sand that is upon the sea shore in multitude." Josephus gives the numbers as 300,000 footmen, 10,000 horsemen, and 20,000 chariots; but we can hardly attach much value to his figures. "Horses and chariots" was an arm unknown to the Israelites, with which hitherto they had never contended. This vast host came together and pitched at the waters of

Merom. Merom, now called Huleh, is the little lake where, as already stated, the three streamlets that form the Jordan unite. It varies in size in summer and winter. To the north, a large plain spreads itself out, sufficient for the encampment of a great army. It was at or near this plain that Abraham overtook the five kings of Mesopotamia and defeated them, rescuing Lot, and all that had been taken from Sodom (Gen. xiv. 14, 15). Now again it is crowded with a mighty host: far as the eye can reach, the plain is darkened by the countless squadrons of the enemy. Probably, after mustering here, their intention was to bear down the Jordan valley, till they came on Joshua at Gilgal, or such other place as he might choose to meet them. But if this was their intention they were outwitted by the activity and, intrepidity of Joshua, who resolved, in spite of their overwhelming numbers, to take the aggressive; and, marching, as before, with extraordinary rapidity, to fall on them by surprise and throw them at once into confusion so that they should be unable to bring their chariots and horses into the action.

It was a very serious undertaking for Joshua, and before attempting it he stood much in need of the encouragement of Jehovah—"Be not afraid because of them: for to-morrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel: thou shalt hough their horses, and burn all their chariots with fire." Not on the number nor on the bravery of his own people, though they had stood by him most nobly, was he to place his reliance, but on the power of God. "Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies" was his *mot d'ordre*, as it was afterwards of that other Joshua, whose battles were not with confused noise nor with garments rolled in blood, but were triumphs of truth and love. Where

else should the true warrior be found but in the midst of his enemies? Joshua knew it, and with the promised help of God, did not flinch from the position, though his opponents were like the sand of the seaside, with a corresponding multitude of chariots and horses. Jesus, too, knew it, and resting on the same promise did not shrink from the conflict in His own person; nor did He hesitate to send His apostles into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature, and look forward to a victory not less complete than that of Joshua, when the hordes of the Canaanites were scattered before him.

"To-morrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel." When he got that assurance, Joshua must already have left Gilgal some days before, and was now within a moderate distance of Merom. There was to be no delay in the completing of the enterprise. "To-morrow about this time." Though, as a rule, the mills of God grind slowly, there are times when their velocity is wonderfully accelerated. He has sometimes wonderful to-morrows. When Hezekiah was gazing appalled on the hosts of Sennacherib as they lay coiled round Jerusalem, God had a "to-morrow about this time" when the terror would be exchanged for a glorious relief. When the apostles met in the upper chamber, and were wondering how they were ever to conquer the world for their Master, there was a "to-morrow" at hand, when the Spirit was to "come down like rain on the mown grass, and like showers that water the earth." When, at the end of the world, iniquity abounds and faith is low, and scoffers are asking, "Where is the promise of His coming?" there will come a "to-morrow about this time" when the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt

with fervent heat, the earth also and all that is therein shall be destroyed. Hold on, brave Joshua, for a little longer; hold on too, ye soldiers of the Lord Jesus, though all the powers of darkness are leagued against you; hold on, ye suffering saints, whose days of pain and nights of waking are such a weariness to your flesh; the glorious "to-morrow" may be at hand which is to end your troubles and bring you the victory!

"We expect a bright to-morrow,
All will be well."

And all was well with Joshua. Arriving suddenly at the waters of Merom, he fell on the mighty host of the enemy, who, taken by surprise, seem not to have struck one blow, but to have been seized at once with that panic which so thoroughly demoralizes Eastern hordes, and to have fled in consternation. In three great streams the fugitives sought their homes. One portion made for Misrephothmaim in the south-west, now, it is thought, represented by Musheirifeh on the north border of the plain of Acre; another struck in a north-easterly direction through the valley of the upper Jordan, or east of Hermon to the valley of Mizpeh; a third, passing through the gorge of the Litany, made for great Zidon, in the distant north. Joshua himself would seem to have pursued this column of fugitives, and, passing over a rough path of more than forty miles, not to have abandoned them till they took refuge within the walls of Zidon. If he had attacked and destroyed that stronghold, it might have changed for the better much of the future history of his country; for the Jezebels and Athaliahs of after days were among the worst enemies of Israel. But he did not deem himself called to that duty It seemed

more urgent that he should demolish Hazor, the capital of the confederacy that he had just scattered. So "he turned back and took Hazor, and smote the king thereof with the sword; for Hazor beforetime was the head of all those kingdoms." For this reason Hazor was treated like Jericho, utterly destroyed, as were also the other cities of the confederate kings. One class of cities was spared, called in our version "the cities that stood still in their strength," but better in the Revised—"the cities that stood on their mounds." The custom referred to is that of building cities on mounds or hills for the sake of protection. With the exception of Hazor, none of these were destroyed. The reason probably was, that it would have cost too much time. But it was in such places that the old inhabitants rallied and entrenched themselves, and from them they were able in after years to inflict much loss and give great trouble to Israel. Joshua, however, had not received instructions to destroy them; they were left to serve a purpose in God's plan of discipline (Judg. ii. 3), and while Israel was often humbled under them their attacks proved occasions of rallying, bringing them back to God, whose worship they were so ready to neglect.

The conquest of Western Palestine was thus virtually completed. First, by taking Jericho, Joshua had possessed himself of the Jordan valley, and established a clear communication with Bashan and Gilead, which the two and a half tribes had received for their inheritance. By the conquest of Ai and Bethel, he had made a way to the great plateau of Western Palestine, and by his treaty with the Gibeonites he had extended his hold a considerable way farther to the south and the west. Then, by the great victory of Bethhoron, he had

crushed the southern chiefs and possessed himself, for the time at least, of all that quarter. As to the inhabitants of the central part, we know not (as we have already said) how they were dealt with, but most probably they were too frightened to resist him. (See p. 202).

The northern section had been subdued at Merom, and much crippled through the pursuit of Joshua after the battle there. The only important parts of the country of which he did not gain possession were the land of the Philistines, the strip of sea coast held by Tyre and Zidon, and some small kingdoms on the north-east. It would seem that in the instructions received by him from Moses, these were not included, for it is expressly said of him that "he left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses." Emphasis is laid on the fact that his conquests were not confined to one section or denomination of territory, but embraced the whole. "Joshua took all that land, the hill country, and all the South, and all the land of Goshen, and the lowland, and the Arabah, and the hill country of Israel, and the lowland of the same; from Mount Halak (or, the bare mountain) [on the south], that goeth up to Seir [the land of Edom], even unto Baalgad in the valley of Lebanon under Mount Hermon [in the north]: and all their kings he took, and smote them, and put them to death" (R.V.). The "Goshen" here spoken of cannot, of course, be the Egyptian Goshen, for this city was in the neighbourhood of Gibeon (chap. x. 41); but its site has not been identified.

We are told that the wars of Joshua occupied a long time. Probably from five to seven years were consumed by them, for though the pitched battles of Bethhoron and Merom virtually decided the mastership

of the country, there must have been a large amount of guerilla warfare, and the sieges of the various cities may have required much time. The list of kings subdued, as given in chap. xii., is a remarkable document. Granting that though called kings they were mostly but little chieftains, still they were formidable enough to a pastoral people unused to the pursuits of war; and it was very striking that not one of them by himself, nor all of them combined, were equal to Joshua. If Joshua was not divinely aided, the conquest of all these chieftains and the capture of their cities is the most inexplicable event in history.

Two additional statements are made towards the close of the eleventh chapter. One is, that with the single exception of Gibeon, no attempt was made by any of the chiefs or cities to make peace with Joshua. "For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the Lord commanded Moses." It would have been very embarrassing to Joshua if they had submitted spontaneously, and cast themselves on his generosity, for his orders were to destroy them. But this difficulty did not arise. None of the cities seem to have shared the conviction of the Gibeonites that opposition was needless, that Israel was sure to prevail, and get possession of the country. When men's backs are up, to use a common phrase, they will do wonders in the way of facing danger and enduring suffering. Even the resistance of the martyrs cannot be wholly ascribed to holy faith and loyalty to God; in many cases, no doubt, something was due to that dogged spirit that won't submit, that won't be beat, that will endure incredible

privation rather than give in. The effect of this resistance by the Canaanites was, that while Joshua's task was increased in one way, it was simplified in another. Ages before, God had given the country to the fathers of the Hebrew nation. That people now came and demanded in God's name possession of the land which He had given them. Had the nations submitted voluntarily they must have left the country to seek new settlements elsewhere. By resisting, they compelled Joshua to meet them with the sword; and having resisted Israel with all their might, nothing remained but that they should encounter the doom which they had so fiercely provoked.

That some of the Canaanites did leave the country seems very probable, although little importance is to be attached to the statement of Procopius that after trying Egypt they settled in Libya, and overspread Africa as far as the Pillars of Hercules. At a fortress in Numidia called Tigisis or Tingis he says that so late as the sixth century after Christ there were discovered near a great wall two pillars of white stone bearing, in Phœnician, the inscription, "We are those who fled before the robber Jeshus, son of Nane." Ewald and others by whom this tradition is noticed are not disposed, owing to its late date, to attach to it any weight.

The other statement relates to the Anakim. Sometime, not precisely defined, while engaged in his conflicts Joshua "cut off the Anakims from the mountains, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel," leaving none of them except in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod (xi. 21). Afterwards it is said (xv. 14) that it was Caleb that drove from Hebron the three

sons of Anak, Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai; but this cannot be counted a contradiction inasmuch as "Joshua," being the leader of the army, must be held to represent and include all who fought in connection with his enterprise. These Anakim were the men that had so terrified the ten spies. "And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight" (Num. xiii. 33). To men of little faith, giants, whether physical or moral, are always formidable. Kings, with the resources of an empire at their back; generals, at the head of mighty battalions; intellectual chiefs, with all their talent and brilliancy, their wit, their irony, their power to make the worse appear the better reason, are more than a match for the obscure handfuls to whom the battles of the faith are often left. But if the obscure handfuls are allied with the Lord of hosts, their victory is sure; the triumphant experience of the forty-sixth psalm awaits them: "God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early."

We are weary of the din of arms, and come at last to the refreshing statement: "And the land rested from war." The annals of peace are always more brief than the records of war; and when we reach this short but welcome clause we might wish that it were so expanded as to fill our eyes and our hearts with the blessings which peace scatters with her kindly hand. For that impression we need only to turn to another page of our Bible, and read of the campaigns of another Joshua. "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people." The contrast is very

glorious. In His Galilee journeys, Jesus traversed the very region where Joshua had drawn his sword against the confederate kings. Joshua had pursued them as far as Zidon, leaving marks of bloodshed along the whole way; Jesus, when "He departed to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon," went to reward faith, to dispossess devils, and to kindle in a desolate heart thanksgiving and joy. Everywhere, throughout all Galilee and the regions beyond, His advent was accompanied with benedictions, and blessings were scattered by Him in His path.

But let us not indulge in too complete a contrast between the two conquerors. Joshua's rough ploughshare prepared the way for Jesus' words of mercy and deeds of love. God's message to man is not all in honeyed words. Even Jesus, as He went through Galilee, proclaimed, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And it was those only who gave heed to the call to repent that became possessors of the kingdom.

CHAPTER XXI.

JOSHUA'S OLD AGE—DIVISION FOR THE EASTERN TRIBES.

JOSHUA xiii., xiv. 1—5.

"THE Lord said unto Joshua, Thou art old and stricken in years." To many men and women this would not be a welcome announcement. They do not like to think that they are old. They do not like to think that the bright, joyous, playful part of life is over, and that they are arrived at the sombre years when they must say, "There is no pleasure in them." Then, again, there are some who really find it hard to believe that they are old. Life has flown past so swiftly that before they thought it was well begun it has gone. It seems so short a time since they were in the full play of their youthful energies, that it is hardly credible that they are now in the sere and yellow leaf. Perhaps, too, they have been able to keep their hearts young all the time, and still retain that buoyant sensation which seems to indicate the presence of youth. And are there not some who have verified the psalm—"They that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing"?

But however much men may like to be young, and however much some may retain in old age of the

feeling of youth, it is certain that the period of strength has its limit, and the period of life also. To the halest and heartiest, if he be not cut off prematurely, the time must come when God will say to him, "Thou art old." It is a solemn word to hear from the lips of God. God tells me my life is past; what use have I made of it? And what does God think of the use I have made of it? And what account of it shall I be able to give when I stand at His bar?

Let the young think well of this, before it is too late to learn how to live.

To Joshua the announcement that he was old and stricken in years does not appear to have brought any painful or regretful feeling. Perhaps he had aged somewhat suddenly; his energies may have failed consciously and rapidly, after his long course of active and anxious military service. He may have been glad to hear God utter the word; he may have been feeling it himself, and wondering how he should be able to go through the campaigns yet necessary to put the children of Israel in full possession of the land. That word may have fallen on his ear with the happy feeling—how considerate God is! He will not burden my old age with a load not suited for it. Though *His* years have no end, and He knows nothing of failing strength, "He knoweth *our* frame, He remembereth that we are dust." He will not "cast me off in the time of old age, nor forsake me when my strength faileth." Happy confidence, especially for the aged poor! It is the want of trust in the heavenly Father that makes so many miserable in old age. When you will not believe that He is considerate and kind, you are left to your own resources, and often to destitution and misery. But when between Him and you there is the

happy relation of father and child; when through Jesus Christ you realize His fatherly love and pity, and in real trust cast yourselves on Him who clothes the lilies and feeds the ravens, your trust is sure to be rewarded, for your heavenly Father knoweth what things you have need of before you ask them.

So Joshua finds that he is now to be relieved by his considerate Master of laborious and anxious service. Not of all service, but of exhausting service, unsuited to his advancing years. Joshua had been a right faithful servant; few men have ever done their work so well. From that day when he stood against Amalek from morning to night, while the rod of Moses was stretched out over him on the hill; thereafter, during all his companionship with Moses on the mount; next in that search-expedition when Caleb and he stood so firm, and did not flinch in the face of the congregation, though every one was for stoning them; and now, from the siege of Jericho to the victory of Merom, and all through the trying and perilous sieges of city after city, year after year, Joshua has proved himself the faithful servant of God and the devoted friend of Israel. During these last years he has enjoyed supreme power, apparently without a rival and without a foe; yet, strange to say, there is no sign of his having been corrupted by power, or made giddy by elevation. He has led a most useful and loyal life, which there is some satisfaction in looking back on. No doubt he is well aware of unnumbered failings: "Who can understand his errors?" But he has the rare satisfaction—oh! who would not wish to share it?—of looking back on a well-spent life, habitually and earnestly regulated amid many infirmities by regard to the will of God. Neither he, nor St. Paul after him,

had any trust in their own good works, as a basis of salvation; yet Paul could say, and Joshua might have said it in spirit: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

Yet Joshua was not to complete that work to which he had contributed so much: "there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed." At one time, no doubt, he thought otherwise, and he desired otherwise. When the tide of victory was setting in for him so steadily, and region after region of the land was falling into his hands, it was natural to expect that before he ended he would sweep all the enemies of Israel before him, and open every door for them throughout the land, even to its utmost borders. Why not make hay when the sun shone? When God had found so apt an instrument for His great design, why did He not employ him to the end? If the natural term of Joshua's strength had come, why did not that God who had supernaturally lengthened out the day for completing the victory of Bethhoron, lengthen out Joshua's day that the whole land of Canaan might be secured?

Here comes in a great mystery of Providence. Instead of lengthening out the period of Joshua's strength, God seems to have cut it short. We can easily understand the lesson for Joshua himself. It is the lesson which so many of God's servants have had to learn. They start with the idea they are to do everything; they are to reform every abuse, overthrow every stronghold of evil, reduce chaos to order and beauty; as if each were

> "the only man on earth
> Responsible for all the thistles blown
> And tigers couchant, struggling in amaze

Against disease and winter, snarling on
For ever, that the world's not paradise."

Sooner or later they find that they must be satisfied with a much humbler *rôle*. They must learn to

"be content in work,
To do the thing we can, and not presume
To fret because it's little. 'Twill employ
Seven men, they say, to make a perfect pin, . . .
Seven men to a pin, and not a man too much!
Seven generations, haply to this world,
To right it visibly a finger's breadth,
And mend its rents a little."

Joshua must be made to feel—perhaps he needs this—that this enterprise is not his, but God's. And God is not limited to one instrument, or to one age, or to one plan. Never does Providence appear to us so strange, as when a noble worker is cut down in the very midst of his work. A young missionary has just shown his splendid capacity for service, when fever strikes him low, and in a few days all that remains of him is rotting in the ground. What can God mean? we sometimes ask impatiently. Does He not know the rare value and the extreme scarcity of such men, that He sets them up apparently just to throw them down? But "God reigneth, let the people tremble." All that bears on the Christian good of the world is in God's plan, and it is very dear to God, and "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." But He is not limited to single agents. When Stephen died, He raised up Saul. For Wicliffe He gave Luther. When George Wishart was burnt He raised up John Knox. Kings, it is said, die, but the king never. The herald that announces "The king is dead," proclaims in the same breath, "God save the king!" God's

workers die, but His work goes on. Joshua is superannuated, so far as the work of conquest is concerned, and that work for a time is suspended. But the reason is that, at the present moment, God desires to develop the courage and energy of each particular tribe. And when the time comes to extend still farther the dominion of Israel, an agent will be found well equipped for the service. From the hills of Bethlehem, a godly youth of dauntless bearing will one day emerge, under whom every foe to Israel shall be brought low, and from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the entire Promised Land shall come under Israel's dominion. And the conquests of David will shine with a brighter lustre than Joshua's, and will be set, as it were, to music of a higher strain. Associated with David's holy songs and holy experience, and with his early life of sadness and humiliation, crowned at last with glory and honour, they will more fitly symbolize the work of the great Joshua, and there will then be diffused over the world a more holy aroma than that of Joshua's conquests,—a fragrance sweet and refreshing to souls innumerable, and fostering the hope of glory,—the rest that remaineth for the people of God, the inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

So Joshua must be content to have done his part, and done it well, although he did not conquer all the land, and there yet remained much to be possessed. Without entering in detail into all the geographical notices of this chapter, it will be well to note briefly what parts of the country were still unsubdued.

First, there were all the borders of the Philistines, and all Geshuri; the five lords of the Philistines, dwelling in Gaza, Ashdod, Ascalon, Gath, and Ekron; and also the Avites. This well defined country con-

sisted mainly of a plain "remarkable in all ages for the extreme riches of its soil; its fields of standing corn, its vineyards and oliveyards, are incidentally mentioned in Scripture (Judg. xv. 5); and in the time of famine the land of the Philistines was the hope of Palestine (2 Kings viii. 2). . . . It was also adapted to the growth of military power; for while the plain itself permitted the use of war chariots, which were the chief arm of offence, the occasional elevations which rise out of it offered secure sites for towns and strongholds. It was, moreover, a commercial country; the great thoroughfare between Phœnicia and Syria on the north and Egypt and Arabia on the south. Ashdod and Gaza were the keys of Egypt, and commanded the transit trade, and the stores of frankincense and myrrh which Alexander captured in the latter place prove it to have been a depôt of Arabian produce."[1]

Geshuri lay between Philistia and the desert, and the Avites were probably some remainder of the Avims, from whom the Philistines conquered the land (Deut. ii. 23).

In many respects it would have been a great boon for the Israelites if Joshua had conquered a people that were so troublesome to them as the Philistines were for many a day. What Joshua left undone, Saul began, but failed to achieve, and at last David accomplished. The Geshurites were subdued with the Amalekites while he was dwelling at Ziklag as an ally of the Philistines (1 Sam. xxvii. 8), and the Philistines themselves were brought into subjection, and had to yield to Israel many of their cities (1 Sam. vii. 14; 2 Sam. viii. 1, 12).

[1] Smith's "Bible Dictionary."

Another important section of the country unsubdued was the Phœnician territory—the land of the Sidonians (vv. 4, 6). Also the hilly country across Lebanon, embracing the valley of Cœle-Syria, and apparently the region of Mount Carmel ("from Lebanon unto Misrephothmaim," ver. 6, and comp. chap. xi. 8). No doubt much of this district was recovered in the time of the Judges, and still more in the time of David; but David made peace with the King of Tyre, who still retained the rocky strip of territory that was so useful to a commercial nation, but would have been almost useless to an agricultural people like the Israelites.

Joshua was not called on to conquer these territories in the sense of driving out all the old inhabitants; but he was instructed to divide the whole land among his people—a task involving, no doubt, its own difficulties, but not the physical labour which war entailed. And in this division he was called first to recognise what had already been done by Moses with the part of the country east of the Jordan. That part had been allotted to Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh; and the allotment was still to hold good.

It is remarkable with what fulness the places are described. First, we have the boundaries of that part of the country generally (vv. 9-12); then of the allotments of each of the two and a half tribes (vv. 15-31). With regard to the district as a whole, the conquest under Moses was manifestly complete, from the river Arnon on the south, to the borders of the Geshurites and Maachathites on the north. The only part not subdued were the territories of these Geshurites and Maachathites. The Geshurites here are not to be confounded with the people of the same name mentioned in ver. 2, who were at the opposite extreme—the south-

west instead of, as here, the north-east of the land. But no doubt the Syrian Geshurites and Maachathites were brought into subjection by David, with all the other tribes in that region, in his great Syrian war, "when he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates" (2 Sam. viii. 3). But instead of expelling or exterminating them, David seems to have allowed them to remain in a tributary condition, for Geshur had its king in the days of Absalom (2 Sam. xiii. 37), to whom that prince fled after the murder of Amnon. With the Maachathites also David had a family connection (2 Sam. iii. 3).

But though the subjugation and occupation of the eastern part of the land was thus tolerably complete (with the exceptions just mentioned), it remained in the undisturbed possession of Israel for the shortest time of any. From Moabites and Ammonites on the south, Canaanites and Syrians on the north and the east, as well as the Midianites, Amalekites, and other tribes of the desert, it was subject to continual invasions. In fact, it was the least settled and least comfortable part of all the country; and doubtless it became soon apparent that though the two tribes and a half had seemed to be very fortunate in having their wish granted to settle in this rich and beautiful region, yet on the whole they had been penny-wise and pound-foolish. Not only were they incessantly assailed and worried by their neighbours, but they were the first to be carried into captivity, when the King of Assyria directed his eyes to Palestine. They had shown somewhat of the spirit of Lot, and they suffered somewhat of his punishment. It is worthy of remark that even at this day this eastern province is the most disturbed part of Palestine. The Bedouins are ever liable to make

their attacks wherever there are crops or cattle to tempt their avarice. People will not sow where they have no chance of reaping; and thus it is that much of that productive region lies waste. The moral is not far to seek: in securing wealth, look not merely at the apparent productiveness of the investment, but give heed to its security, its stability. It is not all gold that glitters either on the stock-exchange or anywhere else. And even that which is real gold partakes of the current instability. We must come back to our Saviour's advice to investors, if we would really be safe: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust do corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

The specification of the allotments need not detain us long. Reuben's was the farthest south. His southern and eastern flanks were covered by the Moabites, who greatly annoyed him. "Unstable as water, he did not excel." Gad settled north of Reuben. In his lot was the southern part of Gilead; Mahanaim, and Peniel, celebrated in the history of Jacob, and Ramoth-gilead, conspicuous in after times. East of Gad were the Ammonites, who proved as troublesome to that tribe as Moab did to Reuben. To the half-tribe of Manasseh the kingdom of Og fell, and the northern half of Gilead. Jabesh-gilead, where Saul routed the Ammonites, was in this tribe (1 Sam. xi.). Here also were some of the places on the lake of Galilee mentioned in the gospel history; here the "desert place" across the sea to which our Lord used to retire for rest; here He fed the multitude; here He cured the demoniac; and here were some

of the mountains where He would spend the night in prayer.

In our Lord's time this portion of Palestine was called Perea. Under the dominion of the Romans, it was comparatively tranquil, and our Lord would sometimes select it, on account of its quiet, as his route to Jerusalem. And many of His gifts of love and mercy were doubtless scattered over its surface.

Two statements are introduced parenthetically in this chapter which hardly belong to the substance of it. One of these, occurring twice, respects the inheritance of the Levites (vv. 14, 33). No territorial possessions were allotted to them corresponding to those of the other tribes. In the one place it is said that "the sacrifices of the Lord God of Israel made by fire were their inheritance"; in the other, that "the Lord God of Israel was their inheritance." We shall afterwards find the arrangements for the Levites more fully detailed (chaps. xx., xxi.). This early allusion to the subject, even before the allotments in Western Palestine begin to be described, shows that their case had been carefully considered, and that it was not by oversight but deliberately that the country was divided without any section being reserved for them.

The other parenthetical statement respects the death of Balaam. "Balaam also, the soothsayer, did the children of Israel slay with the sword among them that were slain by them" (ver. 22). It appears from Numb. xxxi. 8 that the slaughter of Balaam took place in the days of Moses, by the hands of the expedition sent by him to chastise the Midianites for drawing the Israelites into idolatry. That the fact should be again noticed here is probably due to the circumstance that the death of Balaam occurred at the

place which had just been noted—the boundary line between Reuben and Gad. It was a fact well worthy of being again noted. It was a fact never to be forgotten that the man who had been sent for to curse was constrained to bless. As far as Balaam's public conduct was concerned, he behaved well to Israel. He emphasized their Divine election and their glorious privileges. He laid especial stress upon the fact that they were not a Bedouin horde, rushing about in search of plunder, but a sacramental host, executing the judgments of a righteous God—"The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them." This was a valuable testimony, for which Israel might well be grateful. It was when Balaam took part in that disgraceful plot to entice Israel into sensuality and idolatry that he came out in his real colours. It seemed to him very clever, no doubt, to obey the Divine command in the letter by absolutely refusing to curse Israel, while at the same time he accomplished the object he was sent for by seducing them into sins which brought down on them the judgments of God. Nevertheless, he reckoned without his host. Possibly he gained his reward, but he did not live to enjoy it; and "what shall a man be profited if he gain the whole world and forfeit his own life?" (Matt. xvi. 26, R.V.).

The two and a half tribes were well taught by the fate of Balaam that, in the end, however cunningly a man may act, his sin will find him out. They were emphatically reminded that the sins of sensuality and idolatry are exceedingly hateful in the sight of God, and certain to be punished. They were assured by the testimony of Balaam, that Israel, if only faithful, would never cease to enjoy the Divine protection and blessing. But they were reminded that God is not mocked; that

whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. Balaam had sown to the flesh; of the flesh it behoved him to reap corruption. And so must it ever be; however ingeniously you may disguise sin, however you may conceal it from yourself, and persuade yourself to believe that you are not doing wrong, sin must show itself ultimately in its true colours, and your ingenious disguises will not shield it from its doom:—"The wages of sin is DEATH."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE INHERITANCE OF CALEB.[1]

JOSHUA xiv. 6—15.

CALEB is one of those men whom we meet with seldom in Bible history, but whenever we do meet them we are the better for the meeting. Bright and brave, strong, modest and cheerful, there is honesty in his face, courage and decision in the very pose of his body, and the calm confidence of faith in his very look and attitude. It is singular that there should be cause to doubt whether his family were *originally* of the promised seed. When introduced to us in the present passage he is emphatically called "Caleb, the son of

[1] There is some difficulty in adjusting the three passages in which the settlement of Caleb is referred to. From this first passage of the three, we are led to think that it was before the tribe of Judah obtained its portion. Again, from chap. xv. 13 we might suppose that it was simultaneously with the rest of the tribe. From Judg. i. 10, again, it might be thought that the subduing of the natives in Hebron was effected, not by Caleb alone, but by the tribe of Judah, and that it took place "after the death of Joshua" (Judg. i. 1). Putting all these together, it would appear that Hebron was assigned to Caleb before the tribe of Judah was settled; that this allocation was ratified at the general settlement; that as Caleb was a member of the tribe, his services against the Canaanites, and especially the Anakim, were ascribed to his tribe; and that the process of dispossessing the Canaanites went on for some time after the death of Joshua. The repetitions in the narrative concerning Caleb form one of the considera tions that favour the idea of more sources than one having been made use of in the composition of this book.

Jephunneh the Kenezite" (R.V., Kenizzite, rightly, same as Kenizzite in Gen. xv. 19), as if he had been a descendant of Kenaz, a son of Esau (Gen. xxxvi. 11 and 15), and a member of the Kenizzite tribe. It was not customary to distinguish Israelites in this way, but only those who had come among them from other tribes, like "Heber the Kenite," "Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite" (Judg. iv. 11, 17), Uriah the Hittite, Hushai the Archite, etc. Moreover, Othniel, Caleb's younger brother, is called the son of Kenaz (Josh. xv. 17); and further, when it is recorded in the fourteenth verse of this chapter that Hebron became the possession of Caleb, the reason assigned is that he "wholly followed the Lord God *of Israel*." On the other hand, in the genealogical list of 1 Chron. iv. 13, 15, Othniel and Caleb occur as if they were regular members of the tribe; but that list shows obvious signs of imperfection. On the whole, the preponderance of evidence is in favour of the opinion that Caleb's family were originally outside the covenant, but had become proselytes, like Hobab, Rahab, Ruth, and Heber. Their faith was pre-eminently the fruit of conviction, and not the accident of heredity. It had a firmer basis than that of most Israelites. It was woven more closely into the texture of their being, and swayed their lives more powerfully. It is pleasing to think that there may have been many such proselytes; that the promise to Abraham may have attracted souls from the east, and the west, and the north, and the south; that even beyond the limits of the twelve tribes many hearts may have been cheered, and many lives elevated and purified by the promise to him, "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Caleb and Joshua had believed and acted alike, in

opposition to the other ten spies; but Caleb occupies the more prominent place in the story of their heroism and faith. It was he that "stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it" (Numb. xiii. 30); and at first his name occurs alone, as exempted from the sentence of exclusion against the rest of his generation: "But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed Me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went: and his seed shall possess it" (Numb. xiv. 24). As we have said before, it is probable that Caleb was the readier speaker, and it is possible that he was the firmer man. Joshua seems to have wanted that power of initiation which Caleb had. It was because he had always been a good follower that Joshua in his old age was fitted to be a leader. Because he had been a good servant he became a good master. As long as Moses lived, Joshua was his servant. After Moses died, Joshua set himself simply to carry out his instructions. It was a happy thing for him on the return of the ten spies that Caleb was one of them, otherwise he might have found himself in a condition of embarrassment. Caleb was evidently the man who led the opposition to the ten, not only asserting the course of duty, but manifesting the spirit of contempt and defiance toward the faithless cowards that forgot that God was with them. In his inmost heart Joshua was quite of his mind, but probably he wanted the energetic manner, the ringing voice, the fearless attitude of his more demonstrative companion. Certain it is that Caleb reaped the chief honour of that day.[1]

[1] Some readers may no doubt prefer the explanation that when Caleb is mentioned alone one document was followed, and when Caleb and Joshua are coupled, another.

It is beautiful to see that there was no rivalry between them. Not only did Caleb interpose no remonstrance when Joshua was called to succeed Moses, but he seems all through the wars to have yielded to him the most loyal and hearty submission. God had set His seal on Joshua, and the people had ratified the appointment, and Caleb was too magnanimous to allow any poor ambition of his, if he had any, to come in the way of the Divine will and the public good. His affectionate and cordial bearing on the present occasion seems to show that not even in the corner of his heart did there linger a trace of jealousy toward the old friend and companion whom on that occasion he had surpassed, but who had been set so much higher than himself. He came to him as the recognised leader of the people—as the man whose voice was to decide the question he now submitted, as the judge and arbiter in a matter which very closely concerned him and his house.

And yet there are indications of tact on the part of Caleb, of a thorough understanding of the character of Joshua, and of the sort of considerations by which he might be expected to be swayed. There were two grounds on which he might reasonably look for the conceding of his request—his personal services, and the promise of Moses. Caleb knows well that the promise of Moses will influence Joshua much more than any other consideration; therefore he puts it in the foreground. "Thou knowest the thing that the Lord said unto Moses, the man of God, concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea." "Moses, the man of God." Why does Caleb select that remarkable epithet? Why add anything to the usual name, Moses? The use of the epithet was honouring to all the three.

That which constituted the highest glory of Moses was that he was so much at one with God. God's will was ever his law, and he was in such close sympathy with God that whatever instructions he gave on any subject might be assumed to be in accordance with God's will. Moreover, in calling him "the man of God" when addressing Joshua, Caleb assumed that Joshua would be impressed by this consideration, and would be disposed to agree to a request which was not only sanctioned by the will of Moses, but by that higher will which Moses constantly recognised. In short, when Joshua considered that the particular wish of Moses which Caleb now recalled was only the expression of the Divine will, Caleb felt assured that he could not withhold his consent. The three men were indeed a noble trio, worthy descendants of their father Abraham, even if one of the three was no son of Jacob. Long before our Lord taught the petition "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," it had become habitual to them all. Moses was indeed "the man of God,"—pre-eminently in fellowship with Him; in a lower sphere both Caleb and Joshua were of the same order, men who tried to live their lives, and every part of them, only in God.

Having fortified his plea with this strong reference at once to Moses and to God, Caleb proceeds to rehearse the service which had led to the promise of Moses. The facts could not but be well known to Joshua. "Forty years old was I when Moses, the servant of the Lord, sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land, and I brought him word again as it was in my heart. Nevertheless, my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt; but I wholly followed the Lord my God." Why does Caleb put the matter

in this way? Why does he not couple Joshua with himself as having been faithful on that never-to-be-forgotten occasion? The only explanation that seems feasible is, that from the pre-eminent position of Joshua this was unnecessary, perhaps it might have appeared even unbecoming. A soldier making a request of the Duke of Wellington, and recalling some service he had done at the battle of Waterloo, would hardly think it necessary, or even becoming, to say how the Duke, too, had been there, and what surpassing service he had rendered on that day. A soldier like the Duke occupying a position of unrivalled pre-eminence on account of long and brilliant service, does not need to be told what he has done. Joshua was now the leader of Israel, and the last few years had crowned him with such manifold glory that his whole life was transfigured, and individual acts of service did not need to be spoken of. Caleb was comparatively an obscure individual, whose fame rested on a single service now nearly half a century old, which could not, indeed, be quite forgotten, but amid the brilliant events of later times might easily pass out of sight and out of mind. There was no disparagement of Joshua, therefore, in his not being mentioned by Caleb, but, on the contrary, a silent tribute to his exalted office as chief ruler of Israel, and to his all but unparalleled services, especially during these later years.

"I brought him word again, *as it was in my heart.*" The statement is made in no boasting spirit, and yet what a rare virtue it denotes! Caleb, as we now say, had the courage of his convictions. He had both an honest heart and an honest tongue. We can have but little idea what temptations he lay under *not* to speak what was in his heart. For six weeks these ten men

had been his close companions. They had eaten together, slept under the same canvas, walked by the same paths, beguiled the long way by story and anecdote, and no doubt by joke and play of humour, and done kind offices to each other as circumstances required. To break away from your own set, from the comrades of your campaign, to upset their plans, and counsel those in power to a course diametrically opposed to theirs, is one of the most difficult of social duties. And in these days of ours there is no duty more commonly set aside. Moral cowardice has been well said to be one of the most common vices of our age.

What more common in Parliament, for example, than for men to differ strongly from some of the measures of their party, and yet, because it is their party, support them by their votes? And in the ranks of the Church and of its various sections the same tendency prevails, though it may be in a less degree. Of the many able and seemingly honest prelates of the Roman Church who dissented, often with vehemence, from the Vatican decree of the pope's infallibility, what became finally of their opposition? Were there more than one or two who did not surrender in the end, and agree to profess what they did not believe? And to come to more ordinary matters, when our opinions on religious subjects are at a discount, when they are met with ridicule, how often do we conceal them, or trim and modify them in order that we may not share in the current condemnation? The men that have the courage of their convictions are often social martyrs, shut out from the fellowship of their brethren, shut out from every berth of honour or emolument, and yet, for their courage and honesty, worthy of infinitely higher regard than whole hundreds of the time-servers

that "get on" in the world by humouring its errors and its follies.

Nevertheless, though most of us show ourselves miserably weak by *not* speaking out all that is "in our hearts," especially when the honour of our Lord and Master is concerned, we are able to appreciate and cannot fail to admire the noble exhibitions of courage that we sometimes meet with. That beautiful creation of Milton's, the Seraph Abdiel, "faithful found among the faithless, faithful only he," is the type and ideal of the class. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego resisting the enthusiasm of myriads and calmly defying the fiery furnace; the Apostle Paul clinging to his views of the law and the gospel when even his brother Peter had begun to waver; Martin Luther, with his foot on the Bible confronting the whole world; John Knox defying sovereign and nobles and priests alike, determined that the gospel should be freely preached; Carey, going out as a missionary to India amid the derision of the world, because he could not get the words out of his head, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel unto every creature,"—have all exemplified the Caleb spirit that must utter what is in the heart; nor has any new idea commonly laid hold of mankind till the struggles of some great hero or the ashes of some noble martyr have gone to sanctify the cause.

"He that believeth shall not make haste." Caleb believed, and therefore he was patient. Five-and-forty long years had elapsed since Moses, the man of God, speaking in the Spirit of God, had promised him a particular inheritance in the land. It was a long time for faith to live on a promise, but, like a tree in the face of a cliff that seems to grow out of the solid rock,

it derived nourishment from unseen sources. It was a long time to be looking forward; but Caleb, though he did not receive the promise during all that time, was persuaded of it and embraced it, and believed that at last it would come true. He did not anticipate the proper time, though he might have had as plausible reasons for doing so as the two tribes and a half had for asking leave to settle on the east side of the river. He bore his share of warlike work, bore the burden and heat of the day, waited till the proper time for dividing the land. Nor did he rush forward selfishly by himself, disregarding the interests of the rest of his tribe; for the children of Judah, recognising his claim, draw near to Joshua along with him. Nor was it a portion of the land which any tribe might be eager to enter upon that he asked; for it was still so harassed by the Anakim, that there would be no peace till that formidable body of giants were driven out.

It seems that when acting as one of the twelve spies, Caleb had in some emphatic way taken his stand on Hebron. "The land *on which thy foot hath trodden* will be an inheritance to thee." Perhaps the spies were too terrified to approach Hebron, for the sons of the Anakim were there, and, in the confidence of faith, Caleb, or Caleb and Joshua, had gone into it alone. Moses had promised him Hebron, and now he came to claim it. But he came to claim it under circumstances that would have induced most men to let it alone. The driving out of the Anakim was a formidable duty, and the task might have seemed more suitable for one who had the strength and enthusiasm of youth on his side. But Caleb, though eighty-five, was yet young. Age is not best measured by years. He was a remarkable instance of prolonged vigour and

youthful energy. "As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me; as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, and to go out and to come in." Faith, and temperance, and cheerfulness are wonderful aids to longevity. As one reads these words of Caleb, one recalls the saying of a well-known physician, Dr. Richardson, that the human frame might last for a hundred years if it were only treated aright.

There is something singularly touching in Caleb's asking as a favour what was really a most hazardous but important service to the nation. Rough though these Hebrew soldiers were, they were capable of the most gentlemanly and chivalrous acts. There can be no higher act of courtesy than to treat as a favour to yourself what is really a great service to another. Well done, Caleb! You do not ask for a berth which there will be no trouble in taking or in keeping. You are not like Issachar, the strong ass couching between the sheepfolds: "and he saw a resting-place that it was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and he bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant under task-work." The dew of youth is yet upon you, the stirring of lofty purpose and noble endeavour; you are like the warhorse of Job—"he paweth in the valley and rejoiceth in his strength; he mocketh at fear, and is not dismayed; he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains and the shouting."

There is nothing we admire more in military annals than a soldier volunteering for the most hazardous and difficult of posts,—showing

> "That stern joy which warriors feel
> In foemen worthy of their steel."

In the spiritual warfare, too, we do not want instances

of the same spirit. We recall Captain Allan Gardiner choosing Tierra del Fuego as his mission sphere just because the people were so ferocious, the climate so repulsive, and the work so difficult that no one else was likely to take it up. We think of the second band who went out after Gardiner and his companions had been starved to death; and still more after these were massacred by the natives, of the third detachment who were moved simply by the consideration that the case was seemingly so desperate. Or we think of Livingstone begging the directors of the London Missionary Society, wherever they sent him, to be sure that it was "Forward"; turning aside from all previous mission stations, and the comparative ease they afforded, to grapple with the barbarian where he had never begun to be tamed; his eyes thirsting for unknown scenes and untried dangers, because he scorned to build on the foundation of others, and thirsted for "fresh woods and pastures new." We think of him persevering in his task from year to year in the same lofty spirit; disregarding the misery of protracted pain, the intense longings of his weary heart for home, the repulsive society of savages and cannibals, the vexations, disappointments, and obstacles that seemed to multiply every day, the treachery of so-called friends whom he had helped to raise, the indifference of a careless world, and of a languid Church; but ever girding himself with fresh energy for the task which he had undertaken, and of which the difficulties and trials had never been absent from his thoughts. We think of many a young missionary turning away from the comfortable life which he might lead at home and which many of his companions will lead, that he may go where the need is greatest and the fight is hottest, and so render to his

Master the greatest possible service. A crowd of noble names comes to our recollection—Williams, and Judson, and Morrison, and Burns, and Patteson, and Keith-Falconer, and Hannington, and Mackay—men for whom even the Anakim had no terrors, but rather an attraction; but who, serving under another Joshua, differed from Caleb in this, that what they desired was not to destroy these ferocious Anakim, but to conquer them by love, and to demonstrate the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ to change the vilest reprobates into sons of God.

And even now there are other Anakim among us for whom the fate of the Canaanite giants ought to be reserved. Anakim within us—greed, selfishness, love of ease, lust, passion, cruelty—all, if we are faithful, to be put to the edge of the sword. And there are Anakim, tremendous Anakim, around us—drunkenness, and all that fosters it, despite the paltry excuses we so often hear; sensuality, that vile murderer of soul and body together; avarice, so cruelly unjust, and content to gather its hoard from the thews and sinews of men and women to whom life has become worse than slavery; luxurious living, that mocks the struggles of thousands to whom one crumb from the table or one rag from the wardrobe would bring such a blessed relief. With giants like these we need to wage incessant war, and for the necessary spirit we need constant supplies of the faith and courage that were so remarkable in Caleb. He followed the Lord *fully*; believing that if the Lord deserved to be followed at all, He deserved to be followed in full. What was there to gain by following Him one half, and surrendering the other half to the world? Could he count on God helping him if he went with but half his heart into His

service, and, like Lot's wife, looked back even when flying from Sodom? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy might."

The tendency to compromise is one of the besetting sins of the day. In the army or the navy, if one is to serve God at all, one must serve Him wholly. Decision is eminently requisite there, and Christians there are commonly more whole-hearted and consistent than in many circles nominally Christian. Decision is manly, is noble; it brings rest within, and in the end it conciliates the respect of the bitterest foes. Courage is the ornament of Christianity, and the crown of the Christian youth. "FEAR NOT" is one of the brightest gems of the Bible.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE LAND.

JOSHUA xv.—xix.

WE come now in earnest to the distribution of the land. The two and a half tribes have already got their settlements on the other side of Jordan; but the other side of Jordan, though included in the land of promise, was outside the part specially consecrated as the theatre of Divine manifestation and dealing. From Dan to Beersheba and from Jordan to the sea was *par excellence* the land of Israel; it was here the patriarchs had dwelt; it was here that most of the promises had been given; it was here that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been buried; and here also, though in another tomb, that the bones of Joseph had been laid. This portion was the kernel of the inheritance, surrounded by a wide penumbra of more feeble light and fewer privileges. In due time there arose a holy of holies within this consecrated region, when Jerusalem became the capital, the focus of blessing and holy influence.

Now that the distribution of this part of the country begins, we must give special attention to the operation. The narrative looks very bare, but important principles and lessons underlie it. These lists of unfamiliar names look like the *débris* of a quarry—hard, meaning-

less, and to us useless. But nothing is inserted in the Bible without a purpose,—a purpose that in some sense bears on the edification of the successive generations and the various races of men. We are not to pass the distribution over because it looks unpromising, but rather to inquire with all the greater care what the bearing of it is on ourselves.

Now, in the first place, there is something to be learned from the maintenance of the distinction of the twelve tribes, and the distribution of the country into portions corresponding to each. In some degree this was in accordance with Oriental usage; for the country had already been occupied by various races, dwelling in a kind of unity—the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Hivites, Jebusites, Perizzites, and Girgashites. What was peculiar to Israel was, that each of the tribes was descended from one of Jacob's sons, and that their relation to each other was conspicuously maintained, though their dwelling-places were apart. It was an arrangement capable of becoming a great benefit under a right spirit, or a great evil under the opposite. As in the case of the separate states of North America, or the separate cantons of Switzerland, it provided for variety in unity; it gave a measure of local freedom and independence, while it maintained united action; it contributed to the life and vigour of the commonwealth, without destroying its oneness of character, or impairing its common purpose and aim. It promoted that picturesque variety often found in little countries, where each district has a dialect, or a pronunciation, or traditions, or a character of its own; as Yorkshire differs from Devon, or Lancashire from Cornwall; Aberdeenshire from Berwick, or Fife from Ayr. As in a garden, variety of species enlivens and enriches the

effect, so in a community, variety of type enriches and enlivens the common life. A regiment of soldiers clothed in the same uniform, measuring the same stature, marching to the same step, may look very well as a contrast to the promiscuous crowd; but when a painter would paint a striking picture it is from the promiscuous crowd in all their variety of costume and stature and attitude that his figures are drawn. In the case of the Hebrew commonwealth, the distinction of tribes became smaller as time went on, and in New Testament times the three great districts Judæa, Samaria, and Galilee showed only the survival of the fittest. A larger individuality and a wider variety would undoubtedly have prevailed if a good spirit had continued to exist among the tribes, and if all of them had shown the energy and the enterprise of some.

But the wrong spirit came in, and came in with a witness, and mischief ensued. For distinctions in race and family are apt to breed rivalry and enmity, and not only to destroy all the good which may come of variety, but to introduce interminable mischief. For many a long day the Scottish clans were like Ishmael, their hand against every man, and every man's hand against them; or at least one clan was at interminable feud with another, and the country was wretched and desolate. Among the twelve tribes of Israel the spirit of rivalry soon showed itself, leading to disastrous consequences. In the time of the judges, the men of Ephraim exhibited their temper by envying Gideon when he subdued the Midianites, and Jephthah when he subdued the Ammonites; and under Jephthah a prodigious slaughter of Ephraimites resulted from their unreasonable spirit. In the time of the kings, a permanent schism was caused by the revolt of the ten

tribes from the house of David. Thus it is that the sin of man often perverts arrangements designed for good, and so perverts them that they become sources of grievous evil. The family order is a thing of heaven; but let a bad spirit creep into a family, the result is fearful. Let husband and wife become alienated; let father and son begin to quarrel; let brother set himself against brother, and let them begin to scheme not for mutual benefit but for mutual injury, no limits can be set to the resulting mischief and misery.

Many arrangements of our modern civilization that conduce to our comfort when in good order, become sources of unexampled evil when they go wrong. The drainage of houses conduces much to comfort while it works smoothly; but let the drains become choked, and send back into our houses the poisonous gases bred of decomposition, the consequences are appalling. The sanitary inspector must be on the alert to detect mischief in its very beginnings, and apply the remedy before we have well become conscious of the evil. And so a vigilant eye needs ever to be kept on those arrangements of providence that are so beneficial when duly carried out, and so pernicious when thoughtlessly perverted. What a wonderful thing is a little forbearance at the beginning of a threatened strife! What a priceless blessing is the soft answer that turneth away wrath! There is a pithy tract bearing the title "The Oiled Feather." The oiled feather has a remarkable power of smoothing surfaces that would otherwise grate and grind upon each other, and so of averting evil. Among Christians it should be always at hand; for surely, if the forbearance and love that avert quarrels ought to be found anywhere, it is among those who have received the fulness of Divine love and

grace in Jesus Christ. Surely among them there should be no perversion of Divine arrangements; in their homes no quarrels, and in their hearts no rivalry. They ought, instead, to be the peacemakers of the world, not only because they have received the peace that passeth understanding, but because their Master has said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."

2. Again, in the allocation of the tribes in their various territories we have an instance of a great natural law, the law of distribution, a law that, on the whole, operates very beneficially throughout the world. In society there is both a centripetal and a centrifugal force; the centripetal chiefly human, the centrifugal chiefly Divine. Men are prone to cluster together; God promotes dispersion. Through the Divine law of marriage, a man leaves his father's house and cleaves to his wife; a new home is established, a new centre of activity, a new source of population. In the early ages they clustered about the plain of Shinar; the confusion of tongues scattered them abroad. And generally, in any fertile and desirable spot, men have been prone to multiply till food has failed them, and either starvation at home or emigration abroad becomes inevitable. And so it is that, in spite of their cohesive tendency, men are now pretty well scattered over the globe. And when once they are settled in new homes, they acquire adaptation to their locality, and begin to love it. The Esquimaux is not only adapted to his icy home, but is fond of it. The naked negro has no quarrel with the burning sun, but enjoys his sunny life. We of the temperate zone can hardly endure the heat of the tropics, and we shiver at the very thought of Lapland. It is a proof of Divine wisdom that a

world that presents such a variety of climates and conditions has, in all parts of it, inhabitants that enjoy their life.

The same law operates in the vegetable world. Everywhere plants seem to discover the localities where they thrive best. Even in the same country you have one flora for the valley and another for the mountain. The lichen spreads itself along the surface of rocks, or the hard bark of ancient trees; the fungus tarries in damp, unventilated corners; the primrose settles on open banks; the fern in shady groves. There is always a place for the plant, and a plant for the place. And it is so with animals too. The elephant in the spreading forest, the rabbit in the sandy down, the beaver beside the stream, the caterpillar in the leafy garden. If we could explore the ocean we should find the law of distribution in full activity there. There is one great order of fishes for fresh water, another for salt; one great class of insects in hot climates, another in temperate; birds of the air, from the eagle to the humming-bird, from the ostrich to the bat, in localities adapted to their habits. We ask not whether this result was due to creation or to evolution. There it is, and its effect is to cover the earth. All its localities, desirable and undesirable, are more or less occupied with inhabitants. Some of the great deserts that our imagination used to create in Africa or elsewhere do not exist. Barren spots there are, and "miry places and marshes given to salt," but they are not many. The earth has been replenished, and the purpose of God so far fulfilled.

And then there is a distribution of talents. We are not all created alike, with equal dividends of the gifts and faculties that minister in some way to the purposes of our life. We depend more or less on one another:

women on men, and men on women; the young on the old, and sometimes the old on the young; persons of one talent on those of another talent, those with strong sinews on those with clear heads, and those with clear heads on those with strong sinews; in short, society is so constituted that what each has he has for all, and what all have they have for each. The principle of the division of labour is brought in; and in a well-ordered community the general wealth and well-being of the whole are better promoted by the interchange of offices, than if each person within himself had a little stock of all that he required.

The same law of distribution prevails in the Church of Christ. It was exemplified in an interesting way in the case of our Lord's apostles. No one of these was a duplicate of another. Four of them, taking in Paul, were types of varieties which have been found in all ages of the Church. In a remarkable paper in the *Contemporary Review*, Professor Godet of Neuchâtel, after delineating the characteristics of Peter, James, John, and Paul, remarked what an interesting thing it was, that four men of such various temperaments should all have found supreme satisfaction in Jesus of Nazareth, and should have yielded up to Him the homage and service of their lives. And throughout the history of the Church, the distribution of gifts has been equally marked. Chrysostom and Augustine, Jerome and Ambrose, Bernard and Anselm, were all of the same stock, but not of the same type. At the Reformation men of marked individuality were provided for every country. Germany had Luther and Melancthon; France, Calvin and Coligny; Switzerland, Zwingle and Farel, Viret and Œcolampadius; Poland, À-Lasco; Scotland, Knox; England, Cranmer, Latimer,

and Hooper. The missionary field has in like manner been provided for. India has had her Schwartz, her Carey, her Duff, and a host of others; China her Morrison, Burmah her Judson, Polynesia her Williams, Africa her Livingstone. The most unattractive and inhospitable spots have been supplied. Greenland was not too cold for the Moravians, nor the leper-stricken communities of India or Africa too repulsive. And never were Christian men more disposed than to-day to honour that great Christian law of distribution—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

It was a great providential law, therefore, that was recognised in the partition of the land of Canaan among the tribes. Provision was thus made for so scattering the people that they should occupy the whole country, and become adapted to the places where they settled, and to the pursuits proper to them. Even where there seems to us to have been a mere random distribution of places, there may have been underlying adaptations for them, or possibilities of adaptation known only to God; at all events the law of adaptation would take effect, by which a man becomes adapted and attached to the place that not only gives him a home but the means of living, and by which, too, he becomes a greater adept in the methods of work which ensure success.

3. Still further, in the allocation of the tribes in their various territories we have an instance of the way in which God designed the earth to minister most effectually to the wants of man. We do not say that the method now adopted in Canaan was the only plan of distributing land that God ever sanctioned; very probably it was the same method as had prevailed among the Canaanites; but it is beyond doubt that,

such as it was, it was sanctioned by God for His chosen people.

It was a system of peasant proprietorship. The whole landed property of the country was divided among the citizens. Each freeborn Israelite was a landowner, possessing his estate by a tenure, which, so long as the constitution was observed, rendered its permanent alienation from his family impossible. At the fiftieth year, the year of jubilee, every inheritance returned, free of all encumbrance, to the representatives of the original proprietor. The arrangement was equally opposed to the accumulation of overgrown properties in the hands of the few, and to the loss of all property on the part of the many. The extremes of wealth and poverty were alike checked and discouraged, and the lot eulogised by Agur—a moderate competency, neither poverty nor riches, became the general condition of the citizens.

It is difficult to tell what extent of land fell to each family. The portion of the land divided by Joshua has been computed at twenty-five million acres.[1] Dividing this by 600,000, the probable number of *families* at the time of the settlement, we get forty-two acres as the average size of each property. For a Roman citizen, seven acres was counted enough to yield a moderate maintenance, so that even in a country of ordinary productiveness the extent of the Hebrew farms would, before further subdivision became necessary, have been ample. When the population increased the inheritance would of course have to be subdivided. But for several generations this, so far from an inconvenience, would be a positive benefit. It would bring

[1] See Wines on the "Laws of the Ancient Hebrews," p. 388.

about a more complete development of the resources of the soil. The great rule of the Divine economy was thus honoured—nothing was lost.

There is no reason to suppose that the peasant proprietorship of the Israelites induced a stationary and stagnant condition of society, or reduced it to one uniform level—a mere conglomeration of men of uniform wealth, resources, and influence. Though the land was divided equally at first, it could not remain so divided long. In the course of providence, when the direct heirs failed, or when a man married a female proprietor, two or more properties would belong to a single family. Increased capital, skill and industry, or unusual success in driving out the remaining Canaanites, would tend further to the enlargement of properties. Accordingly we meet with "men of great possessions," like Jair the Gileadite, Boaz of Bethlehem, Nabal of Carmel, or Barzillai the Gileadite, even in the earlier periods of Jewish history.[1] There was a sufficient number of men of wealth to give a pleasing variety and healthful impulse to society, without producing the evils of enormous accumulation on the one hand, or frightful indigence on the other.[2]

We in this country, after reaching the extreme on the opposite side, are now trying to get back in the direction of this ancient system. All parties seem now agreed that something of the nature of peasant proprietorship is necessary to solve the agrarian problem in Ireland and in Great Britain too. It is only the fact that in Britain commercial enterprise and emigration afford so many outlets for the energies of our landless

[1] Judg. x. 4; Ruth ii. 1; 1 Sam. xxv. 2; 2 Sam. xvii. 27.

[2] See the author's essay "An Old Key to our Social Problems" in "Counsel and Cheer for the Battle of Life."

countrymen that has tolerated the abuses of property so long among us,—the laws of entail and primogeniture, the accumulation of property far beyond the power of the proprietor to oversee or to manage, the employment of land agents acting solely for the proprietor, and without that sense of responsibility or that interest in the welfare of the people which is natural to the proprietor himself. It is little wonder that theories of land-possession have risen up which are as impracticable in fact as they are wild and lawless in principle. Such desperate imaginations are the fruit of despair—absolute hopelessness of getting back in any other way to a true land law,—to a state of things in which the land would yield the greatest benefit to the whole nation. Not only ought it to supply food and promote health, but also a familiarity with nature, and a sense of freedom, and thus produce contentment and happiness, and a more kindly feeling among all classes. It seems to us one of the most interesting features of the land law recently brought in for Ireland that it tends towards an arrangement of the land in the direction of God's early designs regarding it. If it be feasible for Ireland, why not have it for England and Scotland? Some may scout such matters as purely secular, and not only unworthy of the interference of religious men, but when advocated by them as fitted to prejudice spiritual religion. It is a narrow view. All that is right is religious; all that is according to the will of God is spiritual. Whatever tends to realize the prayer of Agur is good for rich and poor alike: "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me."

4. Lastly, in the arrangements for the distribution of the land among the twelve tribes we may note a

proof of God's interest in the temporal comfort and prosperity of men. It is not God that has created the antithesis of secular and spiritual, as if the two interests were like a see-saw, so that whenever the one went up the other must go down. Things in this world are made to be enjoyed, and the enjoyment of them is agreeable to the will of God, provided we use them as not abusing them. If Scripture condemns indulgence in the pleasures of life, it is when these pleasures are preferred to the higher joys of the Spirit, or when they are allowed to stand in the way of a nobler life and a higher reward. In ordinary circumstances God intends men to be fairly comfortable; He does not desire life to be a perpetual struggle, or a dismal march to the grave. The very words in which Christ counsels us to consider the lilies and the ravens, instead of worrying ourselves about food and clothing, show this; for, under the Divine plan, the ravens are comfortably fed, and the lilies are handsomely clothed.

This is the Divine plan; and if those who enjoy a large share of the comforts of life are often selfish and worldly, it is only another proof how much a wrong spirit may pervert the gifts of God and turn them to evil. The characteristic of a good man, when he enjoys a share of worldly prosperity, is, that he does not let the world become his idol,—it is his servant, it is under his feet; he jealously guards against its becoming his master. His effort is to make a friend of the mammon of unrighteousness, and to turn every portion of it with which he may be entrusted to such a use for the good of others, that when at last he gives in his account, as steward to his Divine Master, he may do so with joy, and not with grief.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE INHERITANCE OF JUDAH.[1]

JOSHUA XV.

JUDAH was the imperial tribe, and it was fitting that he should be planted in a conspicuous territory. Even if the republic had not been destined to give place to the monarchy, some pre-eminence was due to the tribe which had inherited the patriarchal blessing, and from which He was to come in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed. Judah and the sons of Joseph seem to have obtained their settle-

[1] We do not encumber our exposition with a discussion of the extraordinary theory of Wellhausen, to the effect that Judah and Simeon, with Levi, were the first to cross the Jordan and attack the Canaanites; that Simeon and Levi were all but annihilated; that Joshua, who belonged to the tribe of Ephraim, did little more than settle that tribe; and that there was hardly such a thing as united action by the tribes, most of them having acted and fought at their own hand. This theory rests professedly on the ground that Judges i. is a more true and trustworthy account of the settlement than the narrative of Joshua. It is a strange proof of the greater truthfulness of Judges that, according to this theory, its very first statement should be a lie—"It came to pass *after the death of Joshua!*" The narrative of Judges naturally follows that of Joshua because it is plain that while Joshua secured for his people standing ground in the country, he did not secure undisturbed possession. Joshua set them an example of faith and courage which, if followed up by them, would have secured undisturbed possession; but with few exceptions they preferred to tolerate the Canaanites at their side, instead of making a vigorous effort to dispossess them wholly.

ments not only before the other tribes, but in a different manner. They did not obtain them by lot, but apparently by their own choice and by early possession. Judah was not planted in the heart of the country. That position was gained by Ephraim and Manasseh, the children of Joseph, while Judah obtained the southern section. In this position his influence was not so commanding at first as it would have been had he occupied the centre. The portion taken possession of by Judah had belonged to the first batch of kings that Joshua subdued,—the kings that came up to take vengeance on the Gibeonites. What was first assigned to Judah was too large, and the tribe of Simeon got accommodation within his lot (chap. xix. 9). Dan also obtained several cities that had first been given to Judah (comp. chaps. xv. 21-62 and xix. 40-46). In point of fact, Judah ere long swallowed up a great part of Simeon and Dan, and Benjamin was so hemmed in between him and Ephraim that, while Jerusalem was situated within the limits of Benjamin, it was, for all practical purposes, a city of Judah.

The territory of Judah was not pre-eminently fruitful; it was not equal in this respect to that of Ephraim and Manasseh. It had some fertile tracts, but a considerable part of it was mountainous and barren. It was of four descriptions—the hill country, the valley or low country, the south, and the wilderness. "The hill country," says Dean Stanley, "is the part of Palestine which best exemplifies its characteristic scenery; the rounded hills, the broad valleys, the scanty vegetation, the villages and fortresses sometimes standing, more frequently in ruins, on the hill tops; the wells in every valley, the vestiges of terraces whether for corn or wine." Here the lion of the tribe of Judah entrenched himself,

to guard the southern frontier of the Chosen Land, with Simeon, Dan, and Benjamin nestled around him. Well might he be so named in this wild country, more than half a wilderness, the lair of savage beasts, of which the traces gradually disappear as we advance into the interior. Fixed there, and never dislodged, except by the ruin of the whole nation, "he lay down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?"

Many parts of Judah were adapted for the growth of corn: witness Bethlehem, "the house of bread." But the cultivation of the vine was pre-eminently the feature of the tribe. "Here more than elsewhere in Palestine are to be seen on the sides of the hills the vineyards, marked by their watch-towers and walls, seated on their ancient terraces, the earliest and latest symbol of Judah. The elevation of the hills and table-lands of Judah is the true climate of the vine. He 'bound his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes.' It was from the Judæan valley of Eshcol, 'the torrent of the cluster,' that the spies cut down the gigantic cluster of grapes. 'A vineyard on a "hill of olives"' with the 'fence,' and 'the stones gathered out,' and the tower in 'the midst of it,' is the natural figure which both in the prophetical and evangelical records represents the kingdom of Judah. The 'vine' was the emblem of the nation on the coins of the Maccabees, and in the colossal cluster of golden grapes which overhung the porch of the second Temple; and the grapes of Judah still mark the tombstones of the Hebrew race in the oldest of their European cemeteries at Prague."[1]

[1] Stanley's "Sinai and Palestine."

The chapter now before us has a particularly barren look; but if we examine it with care we shall find it not deficient in elements of interest.

1. First, we have an elaborate delineation of the boundaries of the territory allotted to Judah. It is not difficult to follow the boundary line in the main, though some of the names cannot be identified now. The southern border began at the wilderness of Zin, where the host had been encamped more than forty years before, when the twelve spies returned with their report of the land. The line moved in a south-westerly course till it reached "the river of Egypt" and the sea shore. What this "river of Egypt" was is far from clear. Naturally one thinks of the Nile, the only stream that seems to be entitled to such an appellation. On the other hand, the term translated "river" is commonly though not always, applied to brooks or shallow torrents, and hence it has been thought to denote a brook, now called El Arish, about midway in the desert between Gaza and the Pelusiac mouth of the Nile. While we incline to the former view, we own that practically the question is of little consequence; the only difference being that if the boundary reached to the Nile, it included a larger share of the desert than if it had a more northerly limit. The Dead Sea was the chief part of the eastern frontier. The northern boundary began near Gilgal, and stretched westwards to the Mediterranean by a line that passed just south of Jerusalem.

The position of Judah was peculiar, in respect of the enemies by whom he was surrounded. On his eastern frontier, close to the Dead Sea, he was in contact with Moab, and on the south with Edom, the descendants of Esau. On the south-west were the Amalekites of

the desert; and on the west the Philistines, and pre-eminent among them, until Caleb subdued them, the sons of Anak, the giants. On his extreme north, but within the tribe of Benjamin, was the great fortress of the Jebusites. It was no bed of roses that was thus prepared for the lion of the tribe of Judah. If he should rule at all, he must rule in the midst of his enemies. Hemmed in by fierce foes on every side, he needed to show his prowess if he was to prevail against them. It was the necessity of contending with these and other enemies that developed the military genius of David (1 Sam. xvii. 50, xviii. 5, 17, 27, xxvii. 8), and made him the fitting type of the heavenly warrior who goes forth "conquering and to conquer." The vigilance that was needed to keep these enemies at bay was one means of preserving the vigour and independence of the tribe. Living thus in the very heart of foes, Judah was the better fitted to symbolize the Church of Christ, as she is usually found when faithful to her high calling. "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." As long as the Church is militant, it cannot be otherwise; and it little becomes her either to complain on the one hand, or be despondent on the other, however strong and bitter the opposition or even the persecution of her foes.

2. Next, a little episode comes into our narrative (vv. 13-19), in connection with a special allocation of territory within the tribe. The incident of Caleb is rehearsed, as an introduction to the narrative that follows. Caleb, on the strength of his promise to drive

out the Anakim, had got Hebron for his inheritance, and a portion of the country around. Near to Hebron, but on a site now unknown, stood Debir, or Kirjath-sepher, apparently a stronghold of the Anakim. We do not know the circumstances that induced Caleb to put this place up, as it were, to public competition. Whoever should capture it was promised his daughter Achsah in marriage. Othniel, who is called his younger brother, which may perhaps mean his brother's son, took the place, and, according to the bargain, got Achsah for his wife. The capture of Debir is recorded twice, here and in Judges i. 14, 15, and in the latter case with the addition of an incident that followed the marriage, as if in both cases it had been copied from an older record. Achsah was evidently a woman who could look well after her interests. She was not satisfied with the portion of land that fell to Othniel. There was a certain field besides, on which she had set her affection, and which she induced her husband to ask of Caleb. This he appears to have obtained. Then she herself turned supplicant, and having gone to Caleb and lighted down from off her ass,[1] and Caleb having said to her, "What wouldest thou?" she said unto her father, "Give me a blessing; for thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water." ["And she said, Give me a blessing (*margin*, present); for thou hast set me in the land of the south; give me also springs of water," R.V.] Her request was

[1] Founding on the expression, "having lighted off her ass," some have thought that she feigned to fall off, and that her father coming to help her in the compassionate spirit one shows in a case of accident, she took the opportunity to ask and obtain this gift. The explanation is far-fetched if not foolish. Her dismounting is explained by the universal custom when one met a person of superior rank. Comp. Gen. xxiv. 64. See Kitto's "Pictorial Commentary."

granted:—"he gave her the upper springs and the nether springs."

The incident, though picturesque, is somewhat strange, and we naturally ask, why should it have a place in the dry narrative of the settlement? Possibly for the very reason that what concerns the settlement was very dry, and that an incident like this gave it something of living interest. Those who lived at the time must have had a special interest in the matter, for in Judges i. 14 it is said that Achsah moved Othniel to ask of her father "*the* field" (*Heb.*), implying that it was a particular field, well known to the public. The moral interest of the narrative is the light it throws on the generosity of Caleb. His son-in-law asked of him a field, a field apparently of special value; he got it: his daughter asked springs of water, and she too gained her request. We contrast Caleb with Saul, as we afterwards read of him. In no such fashion was David treated by his father-in-law, after his brilliant victories over the Philistines. So far was he from acquiring field or fountain, that he did not even acquire his wife:—"It came to pass at the time when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, that she was given unto Adriel the Meholathite to wife" (1 Sam. xviii. 19). Caleb had another spirit with him. He had the heart of a father, he had a genuine interest in his daughter and son-in-law, and desired to see them comfortable and happy. Kindly and large-hearted, he at once transferred to them valuable possessions that a greedier man would have kept for himself. Evidently he was one of those godlike men that enjoy giving, that have more pleasure in making others happy than in multiplying their own store. "The liberal man deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he

stand." "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty."

It is no great wonder that an incident which reveals the flowing generosity of a godlike heart, should sometimes be turned to account as a symbol of the liberality of God. All human generosity is but a drop from the ocean of the Divine bounty, a faint shadow of the inexhaustible substance. "If ye that are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" If in the earthly father's bosom there be that interest in the welfare of his children which is eager to help them where help is needed and it is in his power to give it, how much more in the bosom of the Father in heaven? Why should any be backward to apply to Him—to say to Him, like Achsah, "Give me a blessing"? It pleases Him to see His children reposing trust in Him, believing in His infinite love. All that He asks of us is to come to Him through Jesus Christ, acknowledging our unworthiness, and pleading the merit of His sacrifice and intercession, as our only ground of acceptance in His sight. After His revelation of His grace in Christ our requests cannot be restricted to mere temporal things; when we ask a blessing it must be one of higher scope and quality. Yet such is His bounty that nothing can be withheld that is really for our good. "No good thing will the Lord withhold from them that walk uprightly." "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord; if I will not open to you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

3. We leave this picturesque incident to re-enter

the wilderness of unfamiliar names. We find a list of no fewer than a hundred and fifteen cities which lay within the confines of the tribe of Judah (vv. 21-32). They fall into four divisions. First, twenty-nine cities belonged to "the south"—the "Negeb" of the Hebrews, the part of the country which bordered on the desert, and to some degree partook of its character. Cities they are called, but few of them were more than villages, and hardly any were important enough to leave their mark on the history. There are two, however, having memorable associations with men of mark, the one carrying us back to a glorious past, the other forward to a disgraceful future. Strange association—Abraham and Judas Iscariot! With Beersheba the name of Abraham is imperishably associated, as well as the name of Isaac. And to this day the very name Beersheba seems to emit a holy fragrance. With Kerioth (ver. 25) we connect the traitor Judas—the Is-cariot of the New Testament being equivalent to Ish-Kerioth, a man of Kerioth, of the Old. Our heart fills with a sense of nausea as we recall the association. The traitor was doubly connected with the tribe of Judah, —by his name and by his birthplace. What mockery of a noble name! "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise." What contrast could be greater than that between the Judah who surrendered himself to slavery to set his brother free, and the Judah who sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver! What extremes of character may we find under the same name, and often in the same family! Strange that so few are drawn by the example of the noble, and so many follow the course of the vile!

The next division, "the valley," the lowland, or Shephelah, embraced three subdivisions—the north-

eastern Shephelah with her fourteen towns (vv. 33-36), the middle, with sixteen (vv. 37-41), and the southern, with nine (vv. 42-44); to which are added three of the cities of the Philistines,—Ekron, Ashdod, and Gaza (vv. 45-47). Many of the places in this list became famous in the history. Eshtaol and Zorah were of note in the history of Samson, but in his time they were Danite settlements. Jarmuth, Lachish, Eglon, and Makkedah had been conspicuous in Joshua's great battle of Bethhoron. Adullam and Keilah figured afterwards in David's outlaw history, and Ashdod and Ekron were two of the Philistine cities to which the ark was taken after the battle of Ebenezer and Aphek (1 Sam. iv. 1, v. 1, 10). In later years Lachish and Libnah were among the places attacked by Sennacherib, King of Assyria, in his great raid upon the country (Isa. xxxvii. 8).

The third great group of cities were those of "the mountain," or highlands. These were mostly in the central part of the territory, on the plateau or ridge that runs along it, rising up from the valley of the Dead Sea on the east, and the Shephelah, or "valley," on the west. Here there were four groups of cities: eleven on the south-west (vv. 48-51), nine farther north (vv. 52-54), ten to the east (vv. 55-57), and six to the north (vv. 58, 59), along with Kirjath-baal and Rabbah in the same neighbourhood. This group included Hebron, of which we hear so much; also Carmel, Maon, and Ziph, conspicuous in the outlaw life of David. It is remarkable that there is no mention of Bethlehem, which lay in "the mountain": it probably had not yet attained to the rank of a town. But its very omission may be regarded as a proof of the contemporaneous date of the book; for soon after Bethlehem was a well-known place (Ruth i.—iv.), and

if the Book of Joshua had been written at the late date sometimes assigned to it, that city could not have failed to have a place in the enumeration.

A fourth group of cities were in "the wilderness" or Midbar. This was a wild rocky region extending between the Dead Sea and the mountains of Hebron. "It is a plateau of white chalk, terminated on the east by cliffs which rise vertically from the Dead Sea shore to a height of about two thousand feet. The scenery is barren and wild beyond all description. The chalky ridges are scored by innumerable torrents, and their narrow crests are separated by broad, flat valleys. Peaks and knolls of fantastic forms rise suddenly from the swelling downs, and magnificent precipices of rugged limestone stand up like fortress walls above the sea. Not a tree nor a spring is visible in the waste; and only the desert partridge and the ibex are found ranging the solitude."[1] This district was in large measure the scene of David's wanderings, and well might he call it "a dry and thirsty land where there is no water" (Psalm lxiii. 1). It was also the scene of the preaching of John the Baptist, at least at the beginning (Matt. iii. 1); for when the administration of baptism became common, it was necessary for him to remove to a better-watered region (John iii. 23). There is some reason to believe that it was also the scene of our Lord's temptation (Matt. iv. 1), the more especially because one of the Evangelists has said that "He was there with the wild beasts" (Mark i. 12).

Only six cities are enumerated as "in the wilderness" (vv. 61, 62), so that its population must have been very small. And of those mentioned some are wholly unknown. The most interesting of the six is

[1] Conder's "Handbook to the Bible," pp. 213, 214.

Engedi, which derived its name from a celebrated fountain, meaning "fountain of the kid." It is noted as one of the hiding-places of David; Saul pursued him to it, and it was there that David spared his life when he found him in a cave (1 Sam. xxiv.). Solomon extols its vineyards and its camphire (Song of Solomon i. 14) [henna-flowers, R.V.], Josephus its balsam (Ant., ix. 1, § 2), and Pliny its palms (v. 17). In ancient times it was the site of a town, and in the fourth century, in Jerome's time, there was still a considerable village; now, however, there is no trace of anything of the kind. Sir Walter Scott, in the "Talisman," makes it the abode of a Christian hermit—Theodoric of Engaddi. It is situated near the middle of the western shore of the Dead Sea. A rich plain, half a mile square, slopes gently from the base of the mountains to the sea; and about a mile up the western acclivity, four hundred feet above the plain, is the fountain of Ain Jiddy, from which the place gets its name.

Such, then, was the distribution of the cities of Judah over the four sections of the territory, the south, the Shephelah, the highlands, and the wilderness. It was an ample and varied domain, and after Caleb expelled the Anakim, there seems to have been little or no opposition to the occupation of the whole by the tribe. But "the crook in the lot" was not wanting. The great Jebusite fortress, Jerusalem, was on the very edge of the northern boundary of Judah. Nominally, as we have said, Jerusalem was in the territory of Benjamin, but really it was a city of Judah. For it is said (ver. 63), "As for the Jebusites, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this

day."[1] For some reason Joshua had omitted to take possession of this stronghold after the battle of Bethhoron. The stream of pursuit had gone westward, and the opportunity of taking Jerusalem when the king had been slain and his army cut to pieces, was lost. And just as in modern history, when the opportunity of taking Sebastopol was lost after the battle of the Alma, and a long, harassing and most disastrous siege had to be resorted to, so it was with Jerusalem; the Jebusites, recovering their spirits after the defeat, were able to hold it, and to defy the tribe of Judah, and all the tribes, for many a long year. While the fortress was held by the Jebusites, Jew and Jebusite dwelt together in the city, leading no doubt a comfortless life, neither the one nor the other feeling truly at home.

The moral is not far to seek. There is a crisis in some men's lives, when they come under the power of religion, and feel the obligation to live to God. If they had decision and courage enough at this crisis to break off all sinful habits and connections, to renounce all unchristian ways of life, to declare with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord,"—they would no doubt experience a sharp opposition, but it would pass over, and peace would come. But often they hesitate, and shrink, and cower; they cannot endure opposition and ridicule; they retain religion enough to appease their consciences, but not to give them satisfaction and joy. It is another case of the men of Judah dwelling with the Jebusites, and with the same result; they are not happy, they are not at rest; they bring little or no honour to their Master, and they have little influence on the world for good.

[1] A proof that Joshua was written before the time of David.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE INHERITANCE OF JOSEPH.

JOSHUA xvi., xvii.

NEXT to Judah, the most important tribe was Joseph; that is, the double tribe to which his two sons gave names, Ephraim and Manasseh. In perpetual acknowledgment of the service rendered by Joseph to the family, by keeping them alive in the famine, it was ordained by Jacob that his two sons should rank with their uncles as founders of tribes (Gen. xlviii. 5). It was also prophetically ordained by Jacob that Ephraim, the younger son, should take rank before Manasseh (Gen. xlviii. 19). The privilege of the double portion, however, remained to Manasseh as the elder son. Hence, in addition to his lot in Gilead and Bashan, he had also a portion in Western Palestine. But Ephraim was otherwise the more important tribe; and when the separation of the two kingdoms took place, Ephraim often gave his name to the larger division. And in the beautiful prophetic vision of Ezekiel, when the coming re-union of the nation is symbolized, it is on this wise: "Son of man, take thou one stick and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions; then take another stick and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions, and join them for thee

one to another into one stick, that they may become one in thine hand" (xxxvii. 16, 17). The superiority allotted to Ephraim was not followed by very happy results; it raised an arrogant spirit in that tribe, of which we find some indications in the present chapter, but more pronounced and mischievous manifestations further on.

The delimitation of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh is not easy to follow, particularly in the Authorized Version, which not only does not translate very accurately, but uses some English expressions of uncertain meaning. The Revised Version is much more helpful, correcting both classes of defects in its predecessor. Yet even the Revised Version sometimes leaves us at a loss. It has been supposed, indeed, that some words have dropped out of the text. Moreover, it has not been found possible to ascertain the position of all the places mentioned. Uncertainty as to the precise boundaries cannot but prevail, and differences of opinion among commentators. But the uncertainty applies only to the minuter features of the description, it bears chiefly on the points at which one tribe adjoined another. The portion of the land occupied by Ephraim and Manasseh is, on the whole, very clearly known, just as their influence on the history of the country is very distinctly marked.

In point of fact, the lot of Joseph in Western Palestine was, in many respects, the most desirable of any. It was a fertile and beautiful district. It embraced the valley of Shechem, the first place of Abraham's sojourn, and reckoned by travellers to be one of the most beautiful spots, some say the most beautiful spot, in Palestine. Samaria, at the head of another valley celebrated for its "glorious beauty," and for its "fatness" or fertility (Isa. xxviii. 1), was at no great distance. Tirzah, a symbol of beauty, in the

Song of Solomon (vi. 4) was another of its cities, as was also Jezreel, "a lovely position for a capital city" (*Tristram*). On the other hand, this portion of the country laboured under the disadvantage of not having been well cleared of its original inhabitants. The men of Ephraim did not exert themselves as much as the men of Judah. This is apparent from what is said in chap. xvi. 10, "They drove not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer"; and also from Joshua's answer to the request of Ephraim for more land (xvii. 15-18).

As we have said already, we have no information regarding Joshua's conquest of this part of the country. It seems to have been run over more superficially than the north and the south. Consequently the ancient inhabitants were still very numerous, and they were formidable likewise, because they had chariots of iron.

In the definition of boundaries we have first a notice applicable to Joseph as a whole, then specifications applicable to Ephraim and Manasseh respectively. The southern border is delineated twice with considerable minuteness, and its general course, extending from near the Jordan at Jericho, past Bethel and Luz, and down the pass of Bethhoron to the Mediterranean, is clear enough. The border between Ephraim and Manasseh is not so clear, nor the northern border of Manasseh. It is further to be remarked that, while we have an elaborate statement of boundaries, we have no list of towns in Ephraim and Manasseh such as we have for the tribe of Judah. This gives countenance to the supposition that part of the ancient record has somehow dropped out. We find, however, another statement about towns which is of no small significance. At chap. xvi. 9 we find that several cities were appropriated to Ephraim that were situated in the territory

of Manasseh. And in like manner several cities were given to Manasseh which were situated in the tribes of Issachar and Asher. Of these last the names are given. They were Bethshean, Ibleam, Dor, Endor, Taanach, and Megiddo. Some of them were famous in after history. Bethshean was the city to whose wall the bodies of Saul and his sons were fixed after the fatal battle of Gilboa; Ibleam was in the neighbourhood of Naboth's vineyard (2 Kings ix. 25, 27); Endor was the place of abode of the woman with a familiar spirit whom Saul went to consult; Taanach was the battle-field of the kings of Canaan whom Barak defeated, and of whom Deborah sung,—

> "The kings came and fought;
> Then fought the kings of Canaan,
> In Taanach by the waters of Megiddo:
> They took no gain of money" (Judg. v. 19).

As for Megiddo, many a battle was fought in its plain. So early as the days of Thotmes III. of Egypt (about 1600 B.C.) it was famous in battle, for in an inscription on the temple of Karnak, containing a record of his conquests in Syria, Megiddo flourishes as the scene of a great conflict. The saddest and most notable of its battles was that between King Josiah and the Egyptians, in which that good young king was killed. In fact, Megiddo obtained such notoriety as a battle-field that in the Apocalypse (xvi. 16) Ar-Mageddon (Har-magedon, R.V.) is the symbol of another kind of battle-ground—the meeting-place for "the war of the great day of God the Almighty."

We can only conjecture why these cities, most of which were in Issachar, were given to Manasseh. They were strongholds in the great plain of Esdraelon, where most of the great battles of Canaan were fought.

For the defence of the plain it seemed important that these places should be held by a stronger tribe than Issachar. Hence they appear to have been given to Manasseh. But, like Ephraim, Manasseh was not able to hold them at first. "The children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities; but the Canaanites would dwell in that land. And it came to pass, when the children of Israel were waxen strong that they put the Canaanites to task-work, and did not utterly drive them out" (R.V.). This last verse appears to have been inserted at a later date, and it agrees with 1 Chron. vii. 29, where several of the same towns are enumerated, and it is added, "In these dwelt the children of Joseph, the son of Israel."

Undoubtedly these sons of Joseph occupied a position which gave them unrivalled opportunities of benefiting their country. But with the exception of the splendid exploit of Gideon, a man of Manasseh, and his little band, we hear of little in the history that redounded to the credit of Joseph's descendants. Nobility of character is not hereditary. Sometimes nature appears to spend all her intellectual and moral wealth on the father, and almost to impoverish the sons. And sometimes the sons live on the virtues of their fathers, and cannot be roused to the exertion or the sacrifice needed to continue their work and maintain their reputation. A humorous saying is recorded of an eminent pastor of the Waldensian Church who found his people much disposed to live on the reputation of their fathers, and tried in vain to get them to do as their fathers did; he said that they were like the potato—the best part of them was under the ground. If you say, "We have Abraham for our father," take care that you say it in the proper sense. Be sure that

you are following hard in his footsteps, and using his example as a spur to move your languid energies, and not as a screen to conceal your miserable defects. If you think of Abraham or of any forefather or body of forefathers as a cover for your nakedness, or a compensation for your defects, you are resorting to a device which has never proved successful in past ages, and is not likely to change its character with you.

After the division, the vain, self-important spirit of Ephraim broke out in a characteristic way. "Why," said he to Joshua, "hast thou given me but one lot and one part for an inheritance, seeing I am a great people, forasmuch as hitherto the Lord hath blessed me?" A grumbling reference seems to be made here to his brother Manasseh, who had received two lots, one on each side of the Jordan. At first it appears that there was some reason in the complaint of Ephraim. The *free* part of his lot seems to have been small, that is, the part not occupied by Canaanites. But we cannot think that the whole inheritance of Ephraim was so small as we find represented in the map of Major Conder, of the Palestine Exploration Fund, in his "Handbook to the Bible," because it is said, both in the Authorized and in the Revised Version, that his western boundary extended to the sea, while Major Conder makes it cease much sooner. But, looking at the whole circumstances, it is probable that Ephraim's complaint was dictated by jealousy of Manasseh, who certainly had received the double inheritance.

Alas, how apt is the spirit of discontent still to crop up when we compare our lot with that of others! Were we quite alone, or were there no case for comparison, we might be content enough; it is when we

think how much more our brother has than we, that we are most liable to murmur. And, bad though murmuring and grieving at the good of our brother may be, it is by no means certain that the evil spirit will stop there. At the very dawn of history we find Cain the murderer of his brother because the one had the favour of God and not the other. What an evil feeling it is that grudges to our brother a larger share of God's blessing; if at the beginning it be not kept under it may carry us on to deeds that may well make us shudder.

Joshua dealt very wisely and fearlessly with the complaint of Ephraim, though it was his own tribe. You say you are a great people—be it so; but if you are a great people, you must be capable of great deeds. Two great undertakings are before you now. There are great woodlands in your lot that have not been cleared—direct your energies to them, and they will afford you more room for settlements. Moreover, the Canaanites are still in possession of a large portion of your lot; up and attack them and drive them out, and you will be furnished with another area for possession. Joshua accepted their estimate of their importance, but gave it a very different practical turn. What they had wished him to do was to take away a portion from some other tribe and give it as an extra allotment to them, so that it would be theirs without labour or trouble. What Joshua did was to spur them to courageous and self-denying exertion, in order that their object might be gained through the instrumentality of their own labour. For the sickly sentiment that desires a mine of gold to start into being and scatter its untold treasure at our feet, he substituted the manly sentiment of the proverb, "No gains without pains." "The

soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing; but the hand of the diligent maketh rich." If they wished more land they must work for it; they must not take idleness for their patron-saint.

We have all heard of the dying father who informed his sons that there was a valuable treasure in a certain field, and counselled them to set to work to find it. With great care they turned up every morsel of the soil; but no treasure appeared, till, observing in autumn what a rich crop covered the field, they came to understand that the fruit of persevering labour was the treasure which their father meant. We have heard, too, of a physician who was consulted by a rich man suffering cruelly from gout, and asked if he had any cure for it. "Yes," said the doctor, "live on sixpence a day, and work for it." The same principle underlay the counsel of Joshua. Of course it gratifies a certain part of our nature to get a mass of wealth without working for it. But this is not the best part of our nature. Probably in no class has the great object of life been so much lost, and the habit of indolence and self-indulgence become so predominant as in that of young men born to the possession of a great fortune, and never requiring to turn a hand for anything they desired. After all, the necessity of work is a great blessing. We speak of the curse of toil, but except when the labour is excessive, or unhealthy in its conditions, or when it has to be prosecuted in sickness or failing strength, it is not a curse but a blessing. Instead of being ashamed of labour, we have cause rather to be proud of it. It guards from numberless temptations; it promotes a healthy body and a healthy mind; it increases the zest of life; it promotes cheerfulness and flowing spirits; it makes rest and healthy

recreation far sweeter when they come, and it gives us affinity to the great Heavenly Worker, by whom, and through whom, and for whom are all things.

This great principle of ordinary life has its place too in the spiritual economy. The age is now past that had for its favourite notion, that seclusion from the world and exemption from all secular employment was the most desirable condition for a servant of God. The experiment of the hermits was tried, but it was a failure. Seclusion from the world and the consecration of the whole being to private acts of devotion and piety were no success. He who moves about among his fellows, and day by day knows the strain of labour, is more likely to prosper spiritually than he who shuts himself up in a cell, and looks on all secular work as pollution. It is not the spiritual invalid who is for ever feeling his pulse and whom every whiff of wind throws into a fever of alarm, that grows up to the full stature of the Christian; but the man who, like Paul, has his hands and his heart for ever full, and whose every spiritual fibre gains strength and vitality from his desires and labours for the good of others. And it is with churches as with individuals. An idle church is a stagnant church, prone to strife, and to all morbid experiences. A church that throws itself into the work of faith and labour of love is far more in the way to be spiritually healthy and strong. It was not for the good of the world merely, but of the church herself likewise, that our Lord gave out that magnificent *mot d'ordre*,—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

Before we pass from the inheritance of the sons of Joseph, it is proper that we should direct attention to an incident which may seem trifling to us, but which

was evidently regarded as of no little moment at the time. What we refer to is the petition presented by the five daughters of Zelophehad, a member of the tribe of Manasseh, for an inheritance in their tribe. Their father had no son, so that the family was represented wholly by daughters. No fewer than four times the incident is referred to, and the names of the five girls given in full (Numb. xxvi. 33, xxvii. 1-11, xxxvi. 11; Josh. xvii. 3). We know not if there be another case in Scripture of such prominence given to names for no moral or spiritual quality, but simply in connection with a law of property.

The question decided by their case was the right of females to inherit property in land when there were no heirs male in the family. We find that the young women themselves had to be champions of their own cause. Evidently possessed of more than ordinary spirit, they had already presented themselves before Moses, Eleazar the priest, and the princes of the congregation, at the door of the tabernacle, and formally made a claim to the inheritance that would have fallen to their father had he been alive. The case was deemed of sufficient importance to be laid before the Lord, because the decision on it would settle similar cases for the whole nation and for all time. The decision was, that in such cases the women should inherit, but under the condition that they should not marry out of their own tribe, so that the property should not be transferred to another tribe. In point of fact, the five sisters married their cousins, and thus kept the property in the tribe of Manasseh.

The incident is interesting, because it shows a larger regard to the rights of women than was usually conceded at the time. Some have, indeed, found fault

with the decision as not going far enough. Why, they have asked, was the right of women to inherit land limited to cases in which there were no men in the family? The decision implied that if there had been one brother, he would have got all the land; the sisters would have been entitled to nothing. The answer to this objection is, that had the rights of women been recognised to this extent, it would have been too great an advance on the public opinion of the time. It was not God's method to enjoin laws absolutely perfect, but to enjoin what the conscience and public opinion of the time might be fairly expected to recognise and support. It may be that under a perfect system women ought to inherit property on equal terms with men. But the Jewish nation was not sufficiently advanced for such a law. The benefit of the enactment was that, when propounded, it met with general approval.

Certainly it was a considerable advance on the ordinary practice of the nations. It established the principle that woman was not a mere chattel, an inferior creature, subject to the control of the man, with no rights of her own. But it was far from being the first time when this principle obtained recognition. The wives of the patriarchs—Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel—were neither chattels, nor drudges, nor concubines. They were ladies, exerting the influence and enjoying the respect due to cultivated, companionable women. And though the law of succession did not give the females of the family equal rights with the males, it recognised them in another way. While the eldest son succeeded to the family home and a double portion of the land, he was expected to make some provision for his widowed mother and unmarried sisters. In most cases the sisters came to be provided for by marriage.

It is the circumstance that among us so many women remain unmarried that has drawn so keen attention to their rights, and already caused so much to be done, as no doubt more will be done speedily, for enlarging their sphere and protecting their interests.

No doubt these spirited daughters of Zelophehad conferred a great benefit on their sex in Israel. Their names are entitled to grateful remembrance, as the names of all are who bring about beneficial arrangements that operate in many directions and to all time. Yet one would be sorry to think that this was the only service which they rendered in their day. One would like to think of them as shedding over their households and friends the lustre of those gentle, womanly qualities which are the glory of the sex. Advocacy of public rights may be a high duty, for the faithful discharge of which the highest praise is due; but such a career emits little of the fragrance which radiates from a female life of faithful love, domestic activity, and sacred devotion. What blessed ideals of life Christianity furnishes for women even of middling talent and ordinary education! It is beautiful to see distinguished talents, high gifts, and persuasive elements directed to the advocacy of neglected claims. "And yet I show unto you a more excellent way."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DISTRIBUTION COMPLETED.

JOSHUA xviii., xix.

AN event of great importance now occurs; the civil arrangements of the country are in a measure provided for, and it is time to set in order the ecclesiastical establishment. First, a place has to be found as the centre of the religious life; next, the tabernacle has to be erected at that place—and this is to be done in the presence of all the congregation. It is well that a godly man like Joshua is at the head of the nation; a less earnest servant of God might have left this great work unheeded. How often, in the emigrations of men, drawn far from their native land in search of a new home, have arrangements for Divine service been forgotten! In such cases the degeneracy into rough manners, uncouth ways of life, perhaps into profanity, debauchery, and lawlessness, has usually been awfully rapid. On the other hand, when the rule of the old puritan has been followed, "Wherever I have a house, there God shall have an altar"; when the modest spire of the wooden church in the prairie indicates that regard has been had to the gospel precept—"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you,"—a touch of heaven is imparted to the rude

and primitive settlement; we may believe that the spirit of Christ is not unknown; the angels of virtue and piety are surely hovering around it.

The narrative is very brief, and no reason is given why Shiloh was selected as the religious centre of the nation. We should have thought that the preference would be given to Shechem, a few miles north, in the neighbourhood of Ebal and Gerizim, which had already been consecrated in a sense to God. That Shiloh was chosen by Divine direction we can hardly doubt, although there may have been reasons of various kinds that commended it to Joshua. Josephus says it was selected for the beauty of the situation; but if the present Seilûn denotes its position, as is generally believed, there is not much to corroborate the assertion of Josephus. Its locality is carefully defined in the Book of Judges (xxi. 19),—"on the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Bethel to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah." As for its appearance, Dean Stanley says, "Shiloh is so utterly featureless that had it not been for the preservation of its name, Seilûn, and for the extreme precision with which its situation is described in the Book of Judges, the spot could never have been identified; and, indeed, from the time of Jerome till the year 1838 [when Robinson identified it], its real site was completely forgotten." Robinson does not think so poorly of it as Stanley, describing it as "surrounded by hills, and looking out into a beautiful oval basin" ("Biblical Researches," ii. 268).

From the days of Joshua, all through the period of the Judges, and on to the last days of Eli the high priest, Shiloh continued to be the abode of the tabernacle, and the great national sanctuary of Israel.

Situated about half-way between Bethel and Shechem, in the tribe of Ephraim, it was close to the centre of the country, and, moreover, not difficult of access for the eastern tribes. Here for many generations the annual assemblies of the nation took place. Here came Hannah from her home in Mount Ephraim to pray for a son; and here little Samuel, "lent to the Lord," spent his beautiful childhood. Through that opening in the mountains, old Eli saw the ark carried by the rash hands of his sons into the battle with the Philistines, and there he sat on his stool watching for the messenger that was to bring tidings of the battle. After the ark was taken by the Philistines, the city that had grown up around the tabernacle appears to have been taken and sacked and the inhabitants massacred (Psalm lxxviii. 60-64). We hear of it in later history as the abode of Ahijah the prophet (1 Kings xi. 29); afterwards it sinks into obscurity. It is to be noted that its name occurs nowhere among the towns of the Canaanites; it is likely that it was a new place, founded by Joshua, and that it derived its name, Shiloh, "rest," from the sacred purpose to which it was now devoted.

Here, then, assembled the whole congregation of the children of Israel, to set up the tabernacle, probably with some such rites as David performed when it was transferred from the house of Obed-Edom to Mount Zion. Hitherto it had remained at Gilgal, the head-quarters and depôt of the nation. The "whole congregation" that now assembled does not necessarily mean the whole community, but only selected representatives, not only of the part that had been engaged in warfare, but also of the rest of the nation.

If we try to form a picture of the state of Israel

while Joshua was carrying on his warlike campaigns, it will appear that his army being but a part of the whole, the rest of the people were occupied in a somewhat random manner, here and there, in providing food for the community, in sowing and reaping the fields, pasturing their flocks, and gathering in the fruits. And from the tone of Joshua it would appear that many of them were content to lead this somewhat irregular life. In a somewhat sharp and reproachful tone he says to them, "How long are ye slack to go to possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers has given you?" One of Joshua's great difficulties was to organize the vast mass of people over whom he presided, to prevent them from falling into careless, slatternly ways, and to keep them up to the mark of absolute regularity and order. Many of them would have been content to jog on carelessly as they had been doing in the desert, in a sort of confused jumble, and to forage about, here and there, as the case might be, in pursuit of the necessaries of life. Their listlessness was provoking. They knew that the Divine plan was quite different, that each tribe was to have a territory of its own, and that measures ought to be taken at once to settle the boundaries of each tribe. But they were taking no steps for this purpose; they were content with social hugger-mugger.

Joshua is old, but his impatience with laziness and irregularity still gives sharpness to his remonstrance, "How long are ye slack to possess the land?" The ring of authority is still in his voice; it still commands obedience. More than that, the organizing faculty is still active—the faculty that decides how a thing is to be done. "Give out from among you three men for each tribe; and I will send them, and they shall rise

and go through the land and describe it according to the inheritance of them."

The men are chosen, three from each of the seven tribes that are not yet settled; and they go through and make a survey of the land. Judah and Joseph are not to be disturbed in the settlements that have already been given to them; but the men are to divide the rest of the country into seven parts, and thereafter it is to be determined by lot to which tribe each part shall belong. It would appear that special note was to be taken of the cities, for when the surveyors returned and gave in their report they "described the land by cities into seven parts in a book." Each city had a certain portion of land connected with it, and the land always went with the city. The art of writing was sufficiently practised to enable them to compose what has been called the "Domesday Book" of Canaan, and the record being in writing was a great safeguard against the disputes that might have arisen had so large a report consisted of mere oral statement. When the seven portions had been balloted for, there was no excuse for any of the tribes clinging any longer to that nomad life, for which, while in the wilderness, they seem to have acquired a real love.

And now we come to the actual division. The most interesting of the tribes yet unsupplied was Benjamin, and the region that fell to him was interesting too. It may be remarked as an unusual arrangement, that when portions were allotted to Judah and to Ephraim, a space was allowed to remain between them, so that the northern border of Judah was at some distance from the southern border of Ephraim. As Judah and Ephraim were the two leading tribes, and in some respects rivals, the benefit of this intervening space

between them is apparent. But for this, whenever their relations became strained, hostilities might have taken place.

Now it was this intervening space that constituted the inheritance of the tribe of Benjamin. For the most part it consisted of deep ravines running from west to east, from the central table-land down to the valley of the Jordan, with mountains between. Many of its cities were perched high in the mountains, as is shown by the commonness of the names Gibeon, Gibeah, Geba, or Gaba, all of which signify "hill"; while Ramah is a "high place," and Mizpeh a "tower." In the wilderness, Benjamin had marched along with Ephraim and Manasseh, all the descendants of Joseph forming a united company; and after the settlement Benjamin naturally inclined towards fellowship with these tribes. But, as events went on, he came more into fellowship with the tribe of Judah, and though Saul, Shimei, and Sheba, the bitterest enemies of the house of David, were all Benjamites, yet, when the separation of the two kingdoms took place under Rehoboam, Benjamin took the side of Judah (1 Kings xii. 21). On the return from the captivity it was the tribes of Judah and Benjamin that took the lead (Ezra i. 5), and throughout the Book of Ezra the returned patriots are usually spoken of as "the men of Judah and Benjamin."

The cities of Benjamin included several of the most famous. Among them was Jericho, the rebuilding of which as a fortified place had been forbidden, but which was still in some degree inhabited; Bethel, which was already very famous in the history, but which, after the separation of the kingdoms, was taken possession of by Jeroboam, and made the shrine of his

calves; Gibeon, the capital of the Gibeonites, and afterwards a shrine frequented by Solomon (1 Kings iii. 5); Ramah, afterwards the dwelling-place of Samuel (1 Sam. vii. 17); Mizpeh, one of the three places where he judged Israel (1 Sam. vii. 16); Gibeath, or Gibeah, where Saul had his palace (1 Sam. x. 26); and last, not least, Jerusalem. As to Jerusalem, some have thought that it lay partly in the territory of Judah, and partly in that of Benjamin. When certain terms in the description of the boundaries are studied there are difficulties that might suggest this solution. But we have seen that in practice there was a considerable amount of giving and taking among the tribes with reference to particular cities, and that sometimes a city, locally within one tribe, belonged to the people of another. So it was with Jerusalem; locally within the inheritance of Benjamin, it was practically occupied by the men of Judah (see chap. xv. 63).

Benjamin was counted the least of the tribes (1 Sam. ix. 31), and when, with other tribes, it was represented by its chief magistrate, it was rather disparagingly distinguished as "little Benjamin with their ruler" (Psalm lxviii. 27). Yet it was strong enough, on one occasion, to set at defiance for a time the combined forces of the other tribes (Judg. xx. 12, etc.). It was distinguished for the singular skill of its slingers; seven hundred, who were left-handed, "could every one sling stones at an hair-breadth and not miss" (Judg. xx. 16). The character of its territory, abounding in rocky mountains, and probably in game, for the capture of which the sling was adapted, might, in some degree, account for this peculiarity.

Many famous battles were fought on the soil of Benjamin. The battle of Ai; that of Gibeon, followed

by the pursuit through Bethhoron, both under Joshua; Jonathan's battle with the Philistines at Michmash (1 Sam. xiv.); and the duel at Gibeon between twelve men of Saul and twelve of David (2 Sam. ii. 15, 16); were all fought within the territory of Benjamin. And when Sennacherib approached Jerusalem from the north, the places which were thrown into panic as he came near were in this tribe. "He is come to Aiath, he is passed through Migron; at Michmash he layeth up his baggage: they are gone over the pass; they have taken up their lodging at Geba: Ramah trembleth; Gibeah of Saul is fled. Cry aloud with thy voice, O daughter of Gallim! hearken, O Laishah! O thou poor Anathoth! Madmenah is a fugitive; the inhabitants of Gebim gather themselves to flee. This very day shall he halt at Nob: he shaketh his hand at the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem" (Isa. x. 28-32, R.V.). In later times Judas Maccabeus gained a victory over the Syrian forces at Bethhoron; and, again, Cestius and his Roman troops were defeated by the Jews; and, once more, centuries later, Richard Cœur de Lion and the flower of English chivalry, when they pushed up through Bethhoron in the hope of reaching Jerusalem, were compelled to retire.

Even down to New Testament times, as Dean Stanley remarks, the influence of Benjamin remained, for the name of Saul, the king whom Benjamin gave to the nation, was preserved in Hebrew families; and when a far greater of that name appeals to his descent, or to the past history of his nation, a glow of satisfaction is visible in the marked emphasis with which he alludes to "the stock of Israel, the tribe of Benjamin" (Phil. iii. 5), and to God's gift of "Saul

the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin" (Acts xiii. 21).

There is little to be said of Simeon, the second of the seven that drew his lot. It is admitted that his portion was taken out of the first allotment to Judah (ver. 9), which was found to be larger than that tribe required, and many of his cities are contained in Judah's list. One act of valour is recorded of Simeon in the first chapter of Judges; after the first settlement, he responded to the appeal of Judah and accompanied him against the Canaanites. But the history of this tribe as a whole might be written in the words of Jacob's prophecy—"I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel." There is no historical reason for the supposition of Wellhausen that Simeon and Levi were all but annihilated on occasion of their attack on the Canaanites. If Simeon had been virtually extinguished, it would not have had a territory assigned to it in the ideal division of the country by Ezekiel (xlviii. 24), nor would it have afforded the twelve thousand of the "sealed" in the symbolical vision of St. John (Rev. vii. 7). While the tribe was scattered, the name of its founder survived, and both as Simeon and Simon it was crowned with honour. It was the name of one of the family of Maccabean patriots; it was borne by the just and devout man that waited in the temple for the consolation of Israel; and it was the Hebrew name of the great Apostle whose honour it was to lay the foundation of the Christian Church.

Next came the tribe of Zebulun, the boundaries of which are given with much precision; but as most of the names are now unknown, and there are also appearances of imperfection in the text, the delineation cannot be followed. "The brook that is before Jokneam" is

supposed to be the Kishon, and Chisloth-Tabor, or the flanks of Tabor, points to the mountain which is the traditional, though probably not the real scene of our Lord's transfiguration. Gittah-hepher, or Gath-hepher, was the birthplace of the prophet Jonah. Bethlehem, now Beit-Lahm, is a miserable village, not to be confounded with the Bethlehem of Judah. As no mention is made either of the sea or the lake of Galilee as a boundary, it is probable that Zebulun was wholly an inland tribe. Strange to say, there is no mention, either here or in any part of the Old Testament, of by far the most famous place in the tribe,—Nazareth, the early residence of our Lord. Yet its situation would indicate that it must have been a very ancient place. Nor is it likely to have escaped the notice of the surveyors when they went through the land. The omission of this name has given rise to the opinion that the list is incomplete.

Issachar occupied an interesting and important site. Jezreel, the first name in the definition of its boundaries, is also the most famous. Jezreel, now represented by Zerin, was situated on a lofty height, and gave name to the whole valley around. Here Ahab had his palace in the days of Elijah. By its association with the worship of Baal, Jezreel got a bad reputation, and in the prophet Hosea degenerate Israel is called Jezreel, a name somewhat similar, but with very different associations (chap. i. 4). Shunem was the place of encampment of the Philistine army before the battle of Gilboa, and also the residence of the woman whose son Elisha restored to life. Bethshemesh must not be confounded with the town of the same name in Judah, nor with that in the tribe of Naphtali. Signifying "house of the sun," it was a very common name among the Canaanites,

as being noted for the worship of the heavenly bodies. As we have already remarked in connection with Megiddo which belonged to Manasseh, the valley of Jezreel, now usually called the plain of Esdraelon, was noted as the great battle-field of Palestine.

Asher also had an interesting territory. Theoretically it extended from Carmel to Sidon, embracing the whole of the Phœnician strip; but practically it did not reach so far. Naphtali was adjacent to Asher, and had the Jordan and the lakes of Merom and Galilee for its eastern boundary. It is in the New Testament that Naphtali enjoys its greatest distinction, the lake of Galilee and the towns on its banks, so conspicuous in the gospel history, having been situated there.

These northern tribes, as is well known, constituted the district of Galilee. The contrast between its early insignificance and its later glory is well brought out in the Revised Version of Isa. ix. 1, 2: "But there shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish. In the former time He brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time hath He made it glorious, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."

Dan was the last tribe whose lot was drawn. And it really seemed as if the least desirable of all the portions fell to him. He was hemmed in between Judah on the one hand and the Philistines on the other, and the Philistines were anything but comfortable neighbours. The best part of the level land was no doubt in their hands, and Dan was limited to what lay at the base of the mountains (see Judg. i. 34, 35),

Very early, therefore, in the history, a colony of Dan went out in search of further possessions, and, having dispossessed some Sidonians at Laish in the extreme north, gave their name to that city, which proverbially denoted the most northerly city in the country, as Beer-sheba, in like manner, denoted the most southerly.

The division of the country was now completed, save that one individual was still unprovided for. And that was Joshua himself. As in a shipwreck, the captain is the last to leave the doomed vessel, so here the leader of the nation was the last to receive a portion. With rare self-denial he waited till every one else was provided for. Here we have a glimpse of his noble spirit. That there would be much grumbling over the division of the country, he no doubt counted inevitable, and that the people would be disposed to come with their complaints to him followed as matter of course. See how he circumvents them! Whoever might be disposed to go to him complaining of his lot, knew the ready answer he would get—you are not worse off than I am, for as yet I have got none! Joshua was content to see the fairest inheritances disposed of to others, while as yet none had been allotted to him. When, last of all, his turn did come, his request was a modest one—"They gave him the city that he asked, even Timnath-serah in the hill country of Ephraim." He might have asked for an inheritance in the fertile and beautiful vale of Shechem, consecrated by one of the earliest promises to Abraham, near to Jacob's well and his ancestor Joseph's tomb, or under shadow of the two mountains, Ebal and Gerizim, where so solemn a transaction had taken place after his people entered the land. He asks for nothing of the kind, but for

a spot on one of the highland hills of Ephraim, a place so obscure that no trace of it remains. It is described in Judg. ii. 9 as "Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, on the north of the mountain of Gaash." The north side of the mountain does not indicate a spot remarkable either for amenity or fertility. In the days of Jerome, his friend Paula is said to have expressed surprise that the distributer of the whole country reserved so wild and mountainous a district for himself.

Could it have been that it was a farm rejected by every one else? that the head of the nation was content with what no one else would have? If it was so, how must this have exalted Joshua in the eyes of his countrymen, and how well fitted it is to exalt him in ours! Whether it was a portion that every one else had despised or not, it undoubtedly was comparatively a poor and far-off inheritance. His choice of it was a splendid rebuke to the grumbling of his tribe, to the pride and selfishness of the "great people" who would not be content with a single lot, and wished an additional one to be assigned to them. "Up with you to the mountain" was Joshua's spirited reply; "cut down the wood, and drive out the Canaanites!"

And Joshua was not the man to give a prescription to others that he was not prepared to take to himself. Up to the mountain he certainly did go; and as he was now too old to fight, he quite probably spent his last years in clearing his lot, cutting down timber, and laboriously preparing the soil for crops. In any case, he set a splendid example of disinterested humility. He showed himself the worthy successor of Moses, who had never hinted at any distinction for his family or any possession in the country beyond what might

be given to an ordinary Levite. How nobly both contrasted with men like Napoleon, who used his influence so greedily for the enrichment and aggrandisement of every member of his family! Joshua came very near to the spirit of our blessed Lord, who "though He was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, made Himself of no reputation, and took on Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man." As we see the Old Testament Jesus retiring in His old age, not to a paradise in some fertile and flowery vale, but to a bleak and rocky farm on the north side of the mountain of Gaash, or to a shaggy forest, still held by the wolf and the bear, we are reminded of the Joshua of the New Testament: "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE CITIES OF REFUGE.

JOSHUA XX.

CITIES of refuge had a very prominent place assigned to them in the records of the Mosaic legislation. First, in that which all allow to be the earliest legislation (Exod. xx.—xxiii.) intimation is given of God's intention to institute such cities (Exod. xxi. 13); then in Numbers (xxxv. 9-34) the plan of these places is given in full, and all the regulations applicable to them; again in Deuteronomy (xix. 1-13) the law on the subject is rehearsed; and finally, in this chapter, we read how the cities were actually instituted, three on either side of Jordan. This frequent introduction of the subject shows that it was regarded as one of great importance, and leads us to expect that we shall find principles underlying it of great value in their bearing even on modern life.[1]

Little needs to be said on the particular cities selected, except that they were conveniently dispersed

[1] These frequent references do not prevent modern critics from affirming that the cities of refuge were no part of the Mosaic legislation. They found this view upon the absence throughout the history of all reference to them as being in actual use. They were not instituted, it is said, till after the Exile. But the very test that rejects them from the early legislation fails here. There is no reference to them as actually occupied in the post-exilian books, amounting, as these

over the country. Kedesh in Galilee in the northern part, Shechem in the central, and Hebron in the south, were all accessible to the people in these regions respectively; as were also, on the other side the river, Bezer in the tribes of Reuben, Ramoth in Gilead, and Golan in Bashan. Those who are fond of detecting the types of spiritual things in material, and who take a hint from Heb. vi. 18, connecting these cities with the sinner's refuge in Christ, naturally think in this connection of the nearness of the Saviour to all who seek Him, and the certainty of protection and deliverance when they put their trust in Him.

1. The first thought that naturally occurs to us when we read of these cities concerns the sanctity of human life; or, if we take the material symbol, the preciousness of human blood. God wished to impress on His people that to put an end to a man's life under any circumstances, was a serious thing. Man was something higher than the beasts that perish. To end a human career, to efface by one dread act all the joys of a man's life, all his dreams and hopes of coming good; to snap all the threads that bound him to his fellows, perhaps to bring want into the homes and desolation into the hearts of all who loved him or leant on him—this, even if done unintentionally, was a very serious thing. To mark this in a very emphatic way was the purpose of these cities of refuge. Though in certain respects (as we shall see) the practice of

are said to do, to half the Old Testament. Their occupation, it is said, with the other Levitical cities, was postponed to the time of Messiah. The shifts to which the critics are put in connection with this institution do not merely indicate a weak point in their theory; they show also how precarious is the position that when you do not *hear* of an institution as in actual operation you may conclude that it was of later date.

avenging blood by the next-of-kin indicated a relic of barbarism, yet, as a testimony to the sacredness of human life, it was characteristic of civilization. It is natural for us to have a feeling, when through carelessness but quite unintentionally one has killed another; when a young man, for example, believing a gun to be unloaded, has discharged its contents into the heart of his sister or his mother, and when the author of this deed gets off scot-free,—we may have a feeling that something is wanting to vindicate the sanctity of human life, and bear witness to the terribleness of the act that extinguished it. And yet it cannot be denied that in our day life is invested with pre-eminent sanctity. Never, probably, was its value higher, or the act of destroying it wilfully, or even carelessly, treated as more serious. Perhaps, too, as things are with us, it is better in cases of unintentional killing to leave the unhappy perpetrator to the punishment of his own feelings, rather than subject him to any legal process, which, while ending with a declaration of his innocence, might needlessly aggravate a most excruciating pain.

It is not a very pleasing feature of the Hebrew economy that this regard to the sanctity of human life was limited to members of the Hebrew nation. All outside the Hebrew circle were treated as little better than the beasts that perish. For Canaanites there was nothing but indiscriminate slaughter. Even in the times of King David we find a barbarity in the treatment of enemies that seems to shut out all sense of brotherhood, and to smother all claim to compassion. We have here a point in which even the Hebrew race were still far behind. They had not come under the influence of that blessed Teacher who taught us to love our enemies. They had no sense of the obligation

arising from the great truth that "God hath made of one blood all the nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." This is one of the points at which we are enabled to see the vast change that was effected by the spirit of Jesus Christ. The very psalms in some places reflect the old spirit, for the writers had not learned to pray as He did—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

2. Even as apportioned to the Hebrew people, there was still an uncivilized element in the arrangements connected with these cities of refuge. This lay in the practice of making the go-el, or nearest of kin, the avenger of blood. The moment a man's blood was shed, the nearest relative became responsible for avenging it. He felt himself possessed by a spirit of retribution, which demanded, with irrepressible urgency, the blood of the man who had killed his relation. It was an unreasoning, restless spirit, making no allowance for the circumstances in which the blood was shed, seeing nothing and knowing nothing save that his relative had been slain, and that it was his duty, at the earliest possible moment, to have blood for blood. Had the law been perfect, it would have simply handed over the killer to the magistrate, whose duty would have been calmly to investigate the case, and either punish or acquit, according as he should find that the man had committed a crime or had caused a misfortune. But, as we have seen, it was characteristic of the Hebrew legislation that it adapted itself to the condition of things which it found, and not to an ideal perfection which the people were not capable of at once realizing. In the office of the go-el there was much that was of wholesome tendency. The feeling was deeply rooted in the Hebrew mind that the nearest of kin was the

guardian of his brother's life, and for this reason he was bound to avenge his death; and instead of crossing this feeling, or seeking wholly to uproot it, the object of Moses was to place it under salutary checks, which should prevent it from inflicting gross injustice where no crime had really been committed. There was something both sacred and salutary in the relation of the go-el to his nearest of kin. When poverty obliged a man to dispose of his property, it was the go-el that was bound to intervene and "redeem" the property. The law served as a check to the cold spirit that is so ready to ask, in reference to one broken down, "Am I my brother's keeper?" It maintained a friendly relation between members of families that might otherwise have been entirely severed from each other. The avenging of blood was regarded as one of the duties resulting from this relation, and had this part of the duty been rudely or summarily superseded, the whole relationship, with all the friendly offices which it involved, might have suffered shipwreck.

3. The course to be followed by the involuntary manslayer was very minutely prescribed. He was to hurry with all speed to the nearest city of refuge, and stand at the entering of the gate till the elders assembled, and then to declare his cause in their ears. If he failed to establish his innocence, he got no protection; but if he made out his case he was free from the avenger of blood, so long as he remained within the city or its precincts. If, however, he wandered out, he was at the mercy of the avenger. Further, he was to remain in the city till the death of the high priest. Some have sought a mystical meaning in this last regulation, as if the high priest figured the Redeemer, and the death of the high priest the completion of

redemption by the death of Christ. But this is too far-fetched to be of weight. The death of the high priest was probably fixed on as a convenient time for releasing the manslayer, it being probable that by that time all keen feeling in reference to his deed would have subsided, and no one would then think that justice had been defrauded when a man with blood on his hands was allowed to go at large.

4. As it was, the involuntary manslayer had thus to undergo a considerable penalty. Having to reside in the city of refuge, he could no longer cultivate his farm or follow his ordinary avocations; he must have found the means of living in some new employment as best he could. His friendships, his whole associations in life, were changed; perhaps he was even separated from his family. To us all this appears a harder line than justice would have prescribed. But, on the one hand, it was a necessary testimony to the strong, though somewhat unreasonable feeling respecting the awfulness, through whatever cause, of shedding innocent blood. A man had to accept of this quietly, just as many a man has to accept the consequences—the social outlawry, it may be, and other penalties—of having had a father of bad character, or of having been present in the company of wicked men when some evil deed was done by them. Then, on the other hand, the fact that the involuntary destruction of life was sure, even at the best, to be followed by such consequences, was fitted to make men very careful. They would naturally endeavour to the utmost to guard against an act that might land them in such a situation; and thus the ordinary operations of daily life would be rendered more secure. And perhaps it was in this way that the whole appointment secured

its end. Some laws are never broken. And here may be the explanation of the fact that the cities of refuge were not much used. In all Bible history we do not meet with a single instance; but this might indicate, not the non-existence of the institution, but the indirect success of the provision, which, though framed to cure, operated by preventing. It made men careful, and thus in silence checked the evil more effectually than if it had often been put in execution.

The desire for vengeance is a very strong feeling of human nature. Nor is it a feeling that soon dies out; it has been known to live, and to live keenly and earnestly, even for centuries. We talk of ancient barbarism; but even in comparatively modern times the story of its deeds is appalling. Witness its operation in the island of Corsica. The historian Filippini says that in thirty years of his own time 28,000 Corsicans had been murdered out of revenge. Another historian calculates that the number of the victims of the Vendetta from 1359 to 1729 was 330,000.[1] If an equal number be allowed for the wounded, we have 666,000 Corsicans victims of revenge. And Corsica was but one part of Italy where the same passion raged. In former ages Florence, Bologna, Verona, Padua, and Milan were conspicuous for the same wild spirit. And, however raised, even by trifling causes, the spirit of vengeance is uncontrollable. The causes, indeed, are often in ludicrous disproportion to the effects. "In Ireland, for instance, it is not so long since one of these blood-feuds in the county of Tipperary had acquired such formidable proportions that the authorities of the Roman Catholic Church there were compelled

[1] Gregorovius, "Wanderings in Corsica."

to resort to a mission in order to put an end to it. A man had been killed nearly a century before in an affray which commenced about the age of a colt. His relatives felt bound to avenge the murder, and their vengeance was again deemed to require fresh vengeance, until faction fights between the 'Three Year Olds' and the 'Four Year Olds' had grown almost into petty wars."[1] When we find the spirit of revenge so blindly fierce even in comparatively modern times, we can the better appreciate the necessity of such a check on its exercise as the cities of refuge supplied. The mere fact that blood had been shed was enough to rouse the legal avenger to the pitch of frenzy; in his blind passion he could think of nothing but blood for blood; and if, in the first excitement of the news, the involuntary manslayer had crossed his path, nothing could have restrained him from falling on him and crimsoning the ground with his blood.

In New Testament times the practice that committed the avenging of blood to the nearest of kin seems to have fallen into abeyance. No such keen desire for revenge was prevalent then. Such cases as those now provided for were doubtless dealt with by the ordinary magistrate. And thus our Lord could grapple directly with the spirit of revenge and retaliation in all its manifestations. "Ye have heard that it was said of old time, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil; but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (R.V.). The old practice was hurtful, because, even in cases where punishment was deserved, it made vengeance or retribution so much a matter of personal

[1] "Pulpit Comment.," *in loco.*

feeling. It stimulated to the utmost pitch what was fiercest in human temper. It is a far better system that commits the dealing with crime to the hands of magistrates, who ought to be, and who are presumed to be, exempt from all personal feeling in the matter. And now, for those whose personal feelings are roused, whether in a case of premeditated or of unintended manslaughter, or of any lesser injury done to themselves, the Christian rule is that those personal feelings are to be overcome; the law of love is to be called into exercise, and retribution is to be left in the hands of the great Judge:—"Vengeance is Mine; I will recompense, saith the Lord."

The attempt to find in the cities of refuge a typical representation of the great salvation fails at every point but one. The safety that was found in the refuge corresponds to the safety that is found in Christ. But even in this point of view the city of refuge rather affords an illustration than constitutes a type. The benefit of the refuge was only for unintentional offences; the salvation of Christ is for all. What Christ saves from is not our misfortune but our guilt. The protection of the city was needed only till the death of the high priest; the protection of Christ is needed till the great public acquittal. All that the manslayer received in the city was safety; but from Christ there is a constant flow of higher and holier blessings. His name is called Jesus because He saves His people from their sins. Not merely from the penalty, but from the sins themselves. It is His high office not only to atone for sin, but to destroy it. "If the Son makes you free, ye shall be free indeed." The virtue that goes out of Him comes into contact with the lust itself and transforms it. The final benefit of Christ is the blessing of

transformation. It is the acquisition of the Christlike spirit. "Moreover whom He did foreknow, them He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn of many brethren."

In turning an incident like this to account, as bearing on our modern life, we are led to think how much harm we are liable to do to others without intending harm, and how deeply we ought to be affected by this consideration, when we discover what we have really done. We may be helped here by thinking of the case of St. Paul. What harm he did in the unconverted period of his life, without intending to do harm, cannot be calculated. But when he came to the light, nothing could have exceeded the depth of his contrition, and, to his last hour, he could not think of the past without horror. It was his great joy to know that his Lord had pardoned him, and that he had been able to find one good use of the very enormity of his conduct—to show the exceeding riches of His pardoning love. But, all his life long, the Apostle was animated by an overwhelming desire to neutralise, as far as he could, the mischief of his early life, and very much of the self-denial and contempt of ease that continued to characterise him was due to this vehement feeling. For though Paul felt that he had done harm in ignorance, and for this cause had obtained mercy, he did not consider that his ignorance excused him altogether. It was an ignorance that proceeded from culpable causes, and that involved effects from which a rightly ordered heart could not but recoil.

In the case of His own murderers our blessed Lord, in His beautiful prayer, recognised a double condition,—they were ignorant, yet they were guilty,

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." They were ignorant of what they were doing, and yet they were doing what needed forgiveness, because it involved guilt. And what we admire in Paul is, that he did not make his ignorance a self-justifying plea, but in the deepest humility owned the inexcusableness of his conduct. To have done harm to our fellow-creatures under any circumstances is a distressing thing, even when we meant the best; but to have down harm to their moral life owing to something wrong in our own, is not only distressing, but humiliating. It is something which we dare not lightly dismiss from our minds, under the plea that we meant the best, but unfortunately we were mistaken. Had we been more careful, had our eye been more single, we should have been full of light, and we should have known that we were not taking the right way to do the best. Errors in moral life always resolve themselves into disorder of our moral nature, and, if traced to their source, will bring to light some fault of indolence, or selfishness, or pride, or carelessness, which was the real cause of our mistaken act.

And where is the man—parent, teacher, pastor, or friend—that does not become conscious, at some time or other, of having influenced for harm those committed to his care? We taught them, perhaps, to despise some good man whose true worth we have afterwards been led to see. We repressed their zeal when we thought it misdirected, with a force which chilled their enthusiasm and carnalised their hearts. We failed to stimulate them to decision for Christ, and allowed the golden opportunity to pass which might have settled their relation to God all the rest of their life. The great realities of the spiritual life were not

brought home to them with the earnestness, the fidelity, the affection that was fitting. "Who can understand his errors?" Who among us but, as he turns some new corner in the path of life, as he reaches some new view-point, as he sees a new flash from heaven reflected on the past,—who among us but feels profoundly that all his life has been marred by unsuspected flaws, and almost wishes that he had never been born? Is there no city of refuge for us to fly to, and to escape the condemnation of our hearts?

It is here that the blessed Lord presents Himself to us in a most blessed light. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Do we not labour indeed, are we not in truth very heavy laden, when we feel the burden of unintentional evil, when we feel that unconsciously we have been doing hurt to others, and incurring the curse of him who causeth the blind to stumble? Are we not heavy laden indeed when we cannot be sure that even yet we are thoroughly on the right track—when we feel that peradventure we are still unconsciously continuing the mischief in some other form? Yet is not the promise true?—"I will give you rest." I will give you pardon for the past, and guidance for the future. I will deliver you from the feeling that you have been all your life sowing seeds of mischief, sure to spring up and pervert those whom you love most dearly. I will give you comfort in the thought that as I have guided you, I will guide them, and you shall have a vision of the future, that may no doubt include some of the terrible features of the shipwreck of St. Paul, but of which the end will be the same—"and so it came to pass that they escaped all safe to land."

And let us learn a lesson of charity. Let us learn

to be very considerate of mischief done by others either unintentionally or in ignorance. What more inexcusable than the excitement of parents over their children or of masters over their servants, when, most undesignedly and not through sheer carelessness, an article of some value is broken or damaged? Have you never done such a thing yourself? And if a like torrent fell on you then from *your* parent or master, did you not feel bitterly that it was unjust? And do you not even now have the same feeling when your temper cools? How bitter the thought of having done injustice to those dependent on you, and of having created in their bosoms a sullen sense of wrong! Let them have their city of refuge for undesigned offences, and never again pursue them or fall on them in the excited spirit of the avenger of blood!

So also with regard to opinions. Many who differ from us in religious opinion differ through ignorance. They have inherited their opinions from their parents or their other ancestors. Their views are shared by nearly all whom they love and with whom they associate; they are contained in their familiar books; they are woven into the web of their daily life. If they were better instructed, if their minds were more free from prejudice, they might agree with us more. Let us make for them the allowance of ignorance, and let us make it not bitterly but respectfully. They are doing much mischief, it may be. They are retarding the progress of beneficent truth; they are thwarting your endeavours to spread Divine light. But they are doing it ignorantly. If you are not called to provide for them a city of refuge, cover them at least with the mantle of charity. Believe that their intentions are better than their acts. Live in the hope of a day

"when perfect light shall pour its rays," when all the mists of prejudice shall be scattered, and you shall perhaps find that in all that is vital in Christian truth and for the Christian life, you and your brethren were not so far separate after all.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE INHERITANCE OF THE LEVITES.

JOSHUA xxi. 1—42.

ONCE and again we have found reference made to the fact that Levites received no territorial inheritance among their brethren (xiii. 14, 33, xiv. 3, 4). They had a higher privilege: the Lord was their inheritance. In the present chapter we have an elaborate account of the arrangements for their settlement; it will therefore be suitable here to rehearse their history, and ascertain the relation they now stood in to the rest of the tribes.

In the days of the patriarchs and during the sojourn in Egypt there were no official priests. Each head of a house discharged the duties of the priesthood in patriarchal times, and a similar arrangement prevailed during the residence in Egypt. The whole nation was holy; in this sense it was a nation of priests; all were set apart for the service of God. By-and-by it pleased God to select a portion of the nation specially for His service, to establish, as it were, a holy of holies within the consecrated nation. The first intimation of this was given on that awful occasion when the firstborn of the Egyptians was slain. In token of His mercy in sparing Israel on that night, all the firstborn of Israel, both of man and beast, were specially consecrated to

the Lord. The animals were to be offered in sacrifice, except in the case of some, such as the ass, not suited for sacrifice; these were to be redeemed by the sacrifice of another animal. Afterwards a similar arrangement was made with reference to the firstborn of men, the tribe of Levi being substituted for them (see Numb. iii. 12). But this arrangement was not made till after the tribe of Levi had shown, by a special act of service, that they were fitted for this honour.

Certainly we should not have thought beforehand that the descendants of Levi would be the specially sacred tribe. Levi himself comes before us in the patriarchal history in no attractive light. He and Simeon were associated together in that massacre of the Shechemites, which we can never read of without horror (Gen. xxxiv. 25). Levi was likewise an accomplice with his brethren in the lamentable tragedy of Joseph. And as nothing better is recorded of him, we are apt to think of him as through life the same. But this were hardly fair. Why should not Levi have shared in that softening influence which undoubtedly came on the other brethren? Why may he not have become a true man of God, and transmitted to his tribe the memory and the example of a holy character? Certain it is that we find among his descendants in Egypt some very noble specimens of godliness. The mother of Moses, a daughter of the house of Levi, is a woman of incomparable faith. Moses, her son, is emphatically "the man of God." Aaron, his brother, moved by a Divine influence, goes to the wilderness to find him when the very crisis of oppression seems to indicate that God's time for the deliverance of Israel is drawing nigh. Miriam, his sister, though far from faultless, piously watched his bulrush-cradle, and after-

wards led the choir whose praises rose to God in a great volume of thanksgiving after crossing the sea.

The first honour conferred on Levi in connection with religious service was the appointment of Aaron and his sons to the special service of the priesthood (Exod. xxviii.; Numb. xviii. 1). This did not necessarily involve any spiritual distinction for the whole tribe of which Aaron was a member, nor was that distinction conferred at that time. It was after the affair of the golden calf that the tribe of Levi received this honour. For when Moses, in his holy zeal against that scandal, called upon all who were on the Lord's side to come to him, "all the sons of Levi gathered themselves unto him" (Exod. xxxii. 26). This seems to imply that that tribe alone held itself aloof from the atrocious idolatry into which even Aaron had been drawn. And apparently it was in connection with this high act of service that Levi was selected as the sacred tribe, and in due time formally substituted for the firstborn in every family (Numb. iii. 12, *sqq.*, viii. 6 *sqq.*, xviii. 2 *sqq.*). From this time the tribe of Levi stood to God in a relation of peculiar honour and sacredness, and had duties assigned to them in harmony with this eminent position.

The tribe of Levi consisted of three main branches, corresponding to Levi's three sons—Kohath, Gershon, and Merari. The Kohathites, though apparently not the oldest (see Numb. iii. 17) were the most distinguished, Moses and Aaron being of that branch. As Levites, the Kohathites had charge of the ark and its sacred furniture, guarding it at all times, and carrying it from place to place during the journeys of the wilderness. The Gershonites had charge of the tabernacle, with its cords, curtains, and coverings. The sons of Merari

had charge of the more solid parts of the tabernacle, "its boards and bars, its pillars and its pins, and all the vessels thereof." Korah, the leader of the rebellion against Moses and Aaron, was, like them, of the family of Kohath, and the object of his rebellion was to punish what he considered the presumption of the two brothers in giving to Aaron the special honours of a priesthood which, in former days, had belonged alike to all the congregation (Numb. xvi. 3). We are accustomed to think that the supernatural proofs of the Divine commission to Moses were so overwhelming that it would have been out of the question for any man to challenge them. But many things show that, though we might have thought opposition to Moses impossible, it prevailed to a great extent. The making of the golden calf, the report of the spies and the commotion that followed, the rebellion of Korah, and many other things, prove that the prevalent spirit was usually that of unbelief and rebellion, and that it was only after many signal miracles and signal judgments that Moses was enabled at last to exercise an unchallenged authority. The rationalist idea, that it was enthusiasm for Moses that led the people to follow him out of Egypt, and endure all the hardships of the wilderness, and that there is nothing more in the Exodus than the story of an Eastern nation leaving one country under a trusted leader to settle in another, is one to which the whole tenor of the history offers unqualified contradiction. And not the least valid ground of opposition is the bitter, deadly spirit in which attempts to frustrate Moses were so often made.

Many of the duties of the Levites as detailed in the Pentateuch were duties for the wilderness. After the settlement in Canaan, and the establishment of the

tabernacle at Shiloh, these duties would undergo a change. The Levites were not all needed to be about the tabernacle. The Gibeonites indeed had been retained as "hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and for the altar of the Lord," so that the more laborious part of the work at Shiloh would be done by them. If the Levites had clustered like a swarm of bees around the sacred establishment, loss would have been sustained alike by themselves and by the people. It was desirable, in accordance with the great law of distribution already referred to, that they should be dispersed over the whole country. The men that stood nearest to God, and who were a standing testimony to the superiority of the spiritual over the secular, who were Divine witnesses, indeed, to the higher part of man's nature, as well as to God's pre-eminent claims, must have failed egregiously of their mission had they been confined to a single city or to the territory of a single tribe. Jacob had foretold both of Simeon and Levi that they would be "divided in Jacob and scattered in Israel." In the case of Levi, the scattering was overruled for good. Designed to point God-wards and heavenwards, the mission of Levi was to remind the people over the whole country that they were not mere earth-worms, created to grub and burrow in the ground, but beings with a nobler destiny, whose highest honour it was to be in communion with God.

The functions of the Levites throughout the country seem to have differed somewhat in successive periods of their history. Here, as in other matters, there was doubtless some development, according as new wants appeared in the spiritual condition of the people, and consequently new obligations for the Levites to fulfil.

When the people fell under special temptations to idolatry, it would naturally fall to the Levites, in connection with the priesthood, to warn them against these temptations, and strive to keep them faithful to their God. But it does not appear that even the Levites could be trusted to continue faithful. It is a sad and singular fact that a grandson of Moses was one of the first to go astray. The Authorized Version, indeed, says that the young man who became a priest to the Danites when they set up a graven image in the city of Dan, was Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh (Judg. xviii. 30). But the Revised Version, not without authority, calls him Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses. Here we have a glimpse of two remarkable facts: in the first place, that a grandson of Moses, a Levite, was located in so confined a place that he had to leave it in search of another, "to sojourn where he could find a place"—so entirely had Moses abstained from steps to secure superior provision for his own family; and, in the second place, that even with his remarkable advantages and relations, this Jonathan, in defiance of the law, was tempted to assume an office of priesthood, and to discharge that office at the shrine of a graven image. We are far indeed from the truth when we suppose that the whole nation of Israel submitted to the law of Moses from the beginning with absolute loyalty, or when we accept the prevalent practice among them at any one period as undoubted evidence of what was then the law.

But let us now turn our attention to the distribution of the Levites as it was planned. We say deliberately "as it was planned," because there is every reason to believe that the plan was not effectually carried out. In no case does there seem to have been such a failure

of official arrangements as in the case of Levi. And the reason is not difficult to find. Few of the cities allotted to them were free of Canaanites at the time. To get actual possession of the cities they must have dispossessed the remaining Canaanites. But, scattered as they were, this was peculiarly difficult. And the other tribes seem to have been in no humour to help them. Hence it is that in the early period of the Judges we find Levites wandering here and there seeking for a settlement, and glad of any occupation they could find (Judg. xviii. 7, xix. 1).

The provision made by Joshua for the Levites was that out of all the other tribes, forty-eight cities with their suburbs, including the six cities of refuge, were allotted to them. It is necessary for us here to call to mind how much Canaan, like other Eastern countries and some countries not Eastern, was a land of towns and villages. Cottages and country-houses standing by themselves were hardly known. A house in its own grounds—"a lodge in a garden of cucumbers"—might shelter a man for a time, but could not be his permanent home. The country was too liable to hostile raids for its inhabitants to dwell thus unprotected. Most of the people had their homes in the towns and villages with which their fields were connected. In consequence of this each town had a circuit of land around it, which always fell to the conquerors when the town was taken. And it is this fact that sometimes makes the boundaries of the tribes so difficult to follow, because these boundaries had to embrace all the lands connected with the cities which they embraced. If it be asked, Did the Levites receive as part of their inheritance all the lands adjacent to their cities, the answer is, No. For in that case the only difference

between them and the other tribes would have been that the Levites had forty-eight little territories instead of one large possession, and there would have been no ground for the distinction so emphatically made that "the Lord was their inheritance," or "the sacrifices of the Lord made by fire."

The cities given to the Levites, even when cleared of Canaanites, were not possessed by Levites alone. We may gather the normal state of affairs from what is said regarding Hebron and Caleb. Hebron was a Levitical city, a city of the priests, a city of refuge; they gave to the Kohathites the city, with the suburbs thereof roundabout; "but the fields of the city, and the villages thereof, gave they to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for his possession" (vv. 11, 12). What are called "suburbs," or, as some prefer to render, "cattle-drives," extended for two thousand cubits round about the city on every side (Numb. xxxv. 5), and were used only for pasture. It behoved the Levites to have cattle of some kind to supply them with their food, the main part of which, besides fruit, was milk and its produce. But, beyond this, the Levites were not entangled with the business of husbandry. They were left free for more spiritual service. It was their part to raise the souls of the people above the level of earth, and, like the angel in the "Pilgrim's Progress," call on those who might otherwise have worshipped the mud-rake to lift up their eyes to the crown of glory, and accept the heavenly gift.

In fact, the whole function of the Levites, ideally at least, was as Moses sung:—

> **"And of Levi he said,**
> **Let thy Urim and thy Thummim be with thy godly one,**
> **Whom thou didst prove at Massah,**

With whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah;
Who said of his father, and of his mother, I have not seen him;
Neither did he acknowledge his brethren,
Nor knew his own children:
For they have observed Thy word,
And kept Thy covenant.
They shall teach Jacob Thy judgments,
And Israel Thy law:
They shall put incense before Thee,
And whole burnt offering upon Thine altar.
Bless, Lord, his substance,
And accept the work of his hands:
Smite through the loins of them that rise up against him,
And of them that hate him, that they rise not again."

Deut. xxxiii. 8-11 (R.V.).

But to come now to the division itself. The Kohathites, or leading family, had no fewer than thirteen cities in the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Simeon, and ten more in Ephraim, Dan, and Manasseh. The thirteen in Judah, Benjamin, and Simeon were for the priests; the other ten were for the other branches of the Kohathites. At first the priests, strictly so called, could not occupy them all. But, as the history advances, the priests become more and more prominent, while the Levites as such seem to hold a less and less conspicuous place. In the Psalms, for example, we sometimes find the house of Levi left out when all classes of worshippers are called on to praise the Lord. In the 135th Psalm all are included:—

"O house of Israel, bless ye the Lord:
O house of Aaron, bless ye the Lord:
O house of Levi, bless ye the Lord:
Ye that fear the Lord, bless ye the Lord."

But in the 115th the Levites are left out:—

"O Israel, trust thou in the Lord:
He is their help and their shield.
O house of Aaron, trust ye in the Lord:
He is their help and their shield.

Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord:
He is their help and their shield."

And in the 118th :—

"Let Israel now say
That His mercy endureth for ever.
Let the house of Aaron now say
That His mercy endureth for ever.
Let them now that fear the Lord say
That His mercy endureth for ever."

There is this to be said for the region where the priests, the house of Aaron, had their cities, viz., the tribe of Judah, that it maintained its integrity longest of any; nor did it thoroughly succumb to idolatry till the dark days of Manasseh, one of its later kings. But, on the other hand, in New Testament times, Judæa was the most bigoted part of the country, and the most bitterly opposed to our Lord. And the explanation is, that the true spirit of Divine service had utterly evaporated from among the priesthood, and the miserable spirit of formalism had come in. The living sap of the institution had been turned into stone, and the plant of renown of early days had become a stony fossil. So true is it that the best institutions, when perverted from their true end, become the sources of greatest evil, and the highest gifts of heaven, when seized by the devil and turned to his purposes, become the most efficient instruments of hell.

The other portions of the family of Kohath were distributed in ten cities over the central part of Western Palestine. Some of them were important centres of influence, such as Bethhoron, Shechem, and Taanach. But the influence of the Levites for good seems to have been feeble in this region, for it was here that Jeroboam reigned, and here that Ahab and Jezebel all but obliterated the worship of Jehovah.

It is commonly believed that Samuel was a member of the tribe of Levi, although there is some confusion in the genealogy as given in 1 Chron. vi. 28, 34; yet Ramathaim Zophim, his father's place of abode, was not one of the Levitical cities. And Samuel's influence was exerted more on the southern than the central district; for, after the destruction of Shiloh, Mizpeh appears to have been his ordinary residence (1 Sam. vii. 6), and afterwards Ramah[1] (vii. 17). It would indeed be a pleasant thought that the inefficiency of the Kohathites as a whole was in some measure redeemed by the incomparable service of Samuel. If Samuel was a Levite, he was a noble instance of what may be done by one zealous and consecrated man, amid the all but universal defection of his official brethren.

The Gershonites were placed in cities in eastern Manasseh, Issachar, Asher, and Naphtali; while the Merarites were in Zebulun, and in the transjordanic tribes of Gad and Reuben. They thus garrisoned the northern and eastern districts. Those placed in the north ought to have been barriers against the gross idolatry of Tyre and Sidon, and those in the east, besides resisting the idolatry of the desert tribes, should have held back that of Damascus and Syria. But there is very little to show that the Levites as a whole rose to the dignity of their mission in these regions, or that they formed a very efficient barrier against the idolatry and corruption which they were designed to meet. No doubt they did much to train the people to the outward observance of the law. They would call them to the celebration of the great annual festivals, and

[1] Ramathaim and Ramah are used interchangeably (1 Sam. i. 1 and 19, ii. 11)

of the new moons and other observances that had to be locally celebrated. They would look after cases of ceremonial defilement, and no doubt they would be careful to enjoin payment of the tithes to which they had a claim. They would do their best to maintain the external distinctions in religion, by which the nation was separated from its neighbours. But, except in rare cases, they do not appear to have been spiritually earnest, nor to have done much of that service which Samuel did in the southern part of the country. Externalism and formalism seem to have been their most frequent characteristics; and externalism and formalism are poor weapons when the enemy cometh in like a flood.

And, whatever may have been the usual life and work of the Levites over the country, they never seem to have realized the glory of the distinction divinely accorded to them—"The Lord is their inheritance." Few, indeed, in any age or country have come to know what is meant by having God for their portion. Unbelief can never grasp that there is a life in God—a real life, so full of enjoyment that all other happiness may be dispensed with; a real property, so rich in every blessing, that the goods and chattels of this world are mere shadows in comparison. Yet that there have been men profoundly impressed by these convictions, in all ages and in many lands, amid prevailing ungodliness, cannot be denied. How otherwise is such a life as that of St. Bernard or that of St. Francis to be accounted for? Or that of St. Columba and the missionaries of Iona? Or, to go farther back, that of St. Paul? There is a magic virtue, or rather a Divine power, in real consecration. "Them that honour Me, I will honour." It is the want of such men that makes

our churches feeble. It is our mixing up our own interests with the interests of God's kingdom and refusing to leave self out of view while we profess to give ourselves wholly to God, that explains the slowness of our progress. If the Levites had all been consecrated men, idolatry and its great brood of corruptions would never have spread over the land of Israel. If all Christian ministers were like their Master, Christianity would spread like wildfire, and in a very little time the light of salvation would brighten the globe.

NOTE.—In this chapter we have accepted the statements of the Pentateuch regarding the Levites as they stand. We readily own that there are difficulties not a few connected with the received view. The modern critical theory that maintains that the Levitical order was a much later institution would no doubt remove many of these difficulties, but only by creating other difficulties far more serious. Besides, the hypothesis of Wellhausen that the tribe of Levi was destroyed with Simeon at the invasion of Canaan—having no foundation to rest on, except the assumption that the prophecy ascribed to Jacob was written at a later date—is ludicrously inadequate to sustain the structure made to rest on it. Nor is it conceivable that, after the captivity, the priests should have been able to make the people believe a totally different account of the history of one of the tribes from that which had previously been received. It is likewise incredible that the Levites should have been "annihilated" or "extinguished" in the days of Joshua, without a single allusion in the history to so terrible a fact. How inconsistent with the concern expressed when the tribe of Benjamin was in danger of extinction (Judg. xxi. 17). The loss of a tribe was like the loss of a limb; it would have marred essentially the symmetry of the nation.

CHAPTER XXIX.

NO FAILURE OF GOD'S PROMISE.

JOSHUA xxi. 43—45.

THE historian has reached a point where he may stand still and look back. One look is comparatively limited; another reaches very far. The immediate survey extends only over the last few years; the remote embraces centuries, and goes back to the time of Abraham.

The historian sees the venerable patriarch of the nation among his flocks and herds in Ur of the Chaldees; receiving there a Divine summons to remove to an unknown land; obeying the call, tarrying at Haran, then traversing the desert, and crossing the Jordan. At Shechem, at Bethel, at Mamre, and at Beersheba, he perceives him listening to the Divine voice that promises that, stranger and pilgrim though he was, the Lord would give his posterity all that land; that he would bless those that blessed him, and curse those that cursed him; and that in him and in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed.

For one hundred long years Abraham had wandered over the country without so much as a house or homestead in it. Isaac had come after him, living the same pilgrim life. Jacob, with a much more stirring and troubled life, had in his old age gone down to

Joseph in Egypt, leaving but one field in the country which he could call his own.

Then came the long centuries of Egyptian bondage. At last the Divine call is heard to leave Egypt, but after this, forty long years have still to be spent in the wilderness. Then Moses, the great leader of the people, dies—dies at the very time when he is apparently most needed, just at the very crisis of Israel's history.

But Joshua comes in Moses' room, and the Lord is with Joshua; He rewards his faith and gives him victory over all his enemies. And now at last comes the fulfilment of the promises to the fathers, hoary with age, and seemingly long forgotten. The bill has at last matured and fallen due. After so many generations, it might be thought that it would have been enough to discharge the main substance of the obligation or that some compromise might have been proposed reducing the claim. After having lain long out of their money, creditors are usually ready to accept a composition. But this was not God's method of settlement. During the whole period of Joshua's leadership, God had been doing nothing but discharging old obligations. Not one word of the original bill had been obliterated; not one item had been allowed to lapse through time. East and west and north and south He had been giving what He had promised to give. And now, as the transaction comes to an end, it is seen that nothing has been omitted or forgotten. "There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken concerning Israel; all came to pass." He proved Himself, as Moses had said, "the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him, and keep His commandments to a thousand generations."

Three gifts are specified which God bestowed on Israel: possessions, rest, and victory. First, He gave them the land which He had sworn to give unto their fathers, and they possessed it; next, He gave them rest round about, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers; and, lastly, He gave them victory over all their enemies. "He satisfied the longing soul, and filled the hungry soul with goodness." He brought His bride to her home, and surrounded her with comforts. And had the bride only been as faithful to her obligations as the Divine bridegroom, it might have been said that

"Time had run back, and fetched the age of gold."

But, it may perhaps be said,—this is only the historian's view of the matter, and it is hardly in accordance with facts. Are we not told that, at an early period, a colony of the tribe of Dan had to go elsewhere in search of land, because they were too hampered in the allotment they had received? And, in the beginning of Judges, are we not told that after the death of Joshua, Judah and Simeon had a desperate tussle with Canaanites and Perizzites who were still in their territories, and that in Bezek alone there were slain of them ten thousand men? And is not the whole of the first chapter of Judges a record of the relations of Israel in various places to the original inhabitants, from which it appears that very many of the Canaanites continued to dwell in the land? Surely this was not what God's promise to the fathers was fitted to convey. Had not God promised that He would "drive out" the seven nations, and give the seed of Abraham possession of the whole? How then could His word be said to be implemented when so

many of the original inhabitants remained? And, in particular, how could the historian of Joshua say so explicitly that "there failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel."

In answer to this objection it is to be remarked that God had never promised to give the people full possession of the land *save through their own exertions made in dependence on Him.* Their possessions were not to fall into their hands as the manna fell in the wilderness or as the water gushed from the rock. The seven nations were not to rush from before them the moment they crossed the Jordan. God always meant that they were to be His instruments for clearing the country. Now, that clearance was evidently designed to be effected in two ways. First, under Joshua, a general encounter with the former possessors was to take place, their confederacies were to be shattered, their spirit was to be broken, and to a certain extent their lands were to be set free. But beyond this, there was to be a further process of clearing out. When each tribe was settled in its lot, it was to address itself, in detail, to the task of dispossessing such Canaanites as yet lingered there. It might not be expedient that all should be engaged in this task together, for this would necessarily interfere with the ordinary operations of agriculture. It was judged better that it should be done piecemeal, and therefore God was asked to say which of the tribes ought to begin it. Judah was named, and Judah aided by Simeon did his work well, and set a good example to the rest. But the other tribes did not act with Judah's spirit, and therefore they did not enjoy his reward. The testimony of the historian is, that nothing failed of any good thing which *the Lord*

had spoken unto the house of Israel. The Lord faithfully performed every part of His obligation. He did not add Israel's obligations to His own, and discharge them too, when they were remiss concerning them. The ultimate result of the whole business was, that trouble befell Israel, inasmuch as he neglected his obligations, while the Lord faithfully performed every one of His. Time therefore did not run back and fetch the age of gold. Israel did not enjoy all the possessions that had been allotted to him. Canaanites remained in the country to torment him like thorns in his sides. But this was Israel's fault, not God's. Though you were to give a lazy farmer the finest farm in the country, you could not make him prosperous if he neglected his fields and idled away the time that should be spent in continuous labour. You cannot keep a man in health if he breathes unwholesome air or drinks water poisoned with putrid matter. No more could Israel be wholly prosperous if he allowed Canaanites to settle quietly at his side. If he had roused himself, and attacked them with courage and in faith, God would have made him to prevail. But, since he preferred ease and quiet to the painfulness of duty, God left him to reap as he had sowed, and suffer the consequences of his neglect. He had seldom long periods of prosperity, and often he had very bitter experiences of calamity and distress.

Certainly God had furnished His people with the materials for a happy and prosperous life, if only they had used them aright. There was first the element of possessions. They had comfortable homes and all the requisites of a comfortable life. It is most true that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." But moderate possessions

are one element, though not the chief or most essential of human prosperity. Possessions, however rich or manifold, in connection with a discontented temper, an ungodly spirit, or a selfish nature, can bring no genuine pleasure. In addition to possessions, the Lord had given Israel rest. Their enemies were not disposed to attack them even when dwelling by their side. True it is that the rest into which Joshua brought them was not the true, the ultimate rest. If Joshua had given them that rest, the Holy Spirit would not have spoken of a rest that was still to come (Heb. iv. 8). But external rest, like external possessions though not all, was one contribution towards prosperity. Moreover, none of their enemies had been able to stand before them; in every encounter that had yet taken place the Lord had delivered them into their hand.

This was a blessed presage for the future. Whatever encounters might yet remain, they might count on the same result, if they lifted up their eyes to God. Their life in the future would not be without toil, without anxiety, without danger. But if they looked to Him and made the requisite efforts, God was ready to bless their toil, He was able to overcome their anxieties, He was sure as in the past to subdue their enemies. The gifts that God had conferred on them, and the materials of enjoyment with which He had surrounded them, were not designed to make them independent, as if they could now do everything for themselves. God's purpose was the very reverse. He wished to keep up the sense of dependence on Him, and to encourage at every turn the habit that seeks unto God, and goes to Him for help.

For this, after all, is the great lesson for all human beings. The great thing for us all is to keep up a

living connection with God, so that our whole nature shall be replenished out of His fulness, and purified and elevated by His Divine influence. Whatever draws us to God draws us to the fountain of all that is best and purest and noblest. God would have conferred but a poor blessing on Israel if He had just settled them in the land, and then left them to themselves, without any occasion or inducement to fellowship with Him. The inducements to resort to Him which they were to be continually under were by far the most valuable part of what God now conferred upon them. The certainty that all would go wrong, that their possessions would be invaded and their rest disturbed, and that their enemies would prove victorious unless they sought continually to their God, fostered the most precious of all habits—that drawing near to God which brings with it all spiritual blessing.

"Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee!
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me,
Still all my song would be
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee!"

There is no small amount of instruction to be drawn by all of us from this record of Israel's experience.

First, it is of supreme importance for us all to have our hearts firmly established in the conviction of the faithfulness of God. It should be our habit to regard this as an attribute on which we not only may, but must rely. To ascribe to God any laxity as to His word or promises were to cast a fearful imputation on His holy nature. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass away." "He is not a man

that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent." Nothing can be conceived that could make it better to God to break His word than to keep it. This is the root of all religion; it is the basis of faith, the true ground of trust. To train our minds to habitual reliance on all that God has said, is one of the most vital and blessed exercises of spiritual religion. It is alike honouring to God and beneficial to ourselves. To search out from the body of Scripture the promises of God; to fasten our attention on them one by one; and to exercise our minds on the thought that in Christ Jesus they are yea, and in Him Amen, is a most blessed help to spiritual stability and spiritual growth. And in our prayers there is nothing more fitted to give us confidence than to plead in this spirit the promises that God has made. No plea is more powerful than the Psalmist's—"Remember Thy word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope." How many sadly perplexed men have found rest from the words: "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it."

But secondly, we may learn from this passage that, wherever the promises of God *seem* to fail, the fault is not His, but ours. On the one hand, we are taught clearly that delay is not failure, and on the other that where there does seem to be failure there is none really on the part of God. At least five-and-twenty long years elapsed between God's first promise to Abraham and the birth of Isaac. Four hundred years were to be spent by the chosen seed in bondage in Egypt. And even after the deliverance from Egypt there came the sojourn in the wilderness of other forty years. Yet God was faithful all the time. How often

we need to recall the text, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day! "Though the vision tarry," do not give it up in despair, but "wait for it" (Hab. ii. 3).

Perhaps it is in the matter of answers to prayer that we are most liable to the temptation that God forgets His promises. Have we not the most explicit and abundant promises that prayer will be answered? Yet how many have prayed, and seemingly prayed in vain! Nay, does not the very opposite of what we pray for often come? We entreat God to spare a beloved life; that life is taken away. We pray for victory over temptation; the temptation seems to acquire a redoubled force. We pray for success in business; the clouds seem to thicken the more. We ask, "Has God forgotten to be gracious? Is His mercy clean gone for ever? Does His promise fail for evermore?" Nay, let us rally our faith. "Then I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High" (Psalm lxxvii. 10). If my prayer was not answered, it was not God's fault. It may be that, like Israel, I failed in my part. I may have been laying the whole burden on God, and omitting something that it fell to me to do. I may have been asking for something that would not have been for my good or for God's glory. I may have failed in that spirit of affectionate trust which is a requisite of acceptable prayer. Let us remember that God knows what things we have need of before we ask Him. And God is infinitely kind and willing to bless us. What He longs for on our part is the spirit of filial trust. What He values prayer for is that it is the channel of this spirit. We can never say that God disregards prayer unless we can say that we approached Him, and

spoke to Him like confiding children dealing with a loving father, and He cast us off. But how often do we go to the footstool half hoping, half doubting, instead of going in the full conviction,—"Our gracious Father is sure to hear us; and if He do not give us the precise thing we ask, He is sure to give us something better." Let prayer ever be the outcome of a profound belief in the infinite love of God, and His constant readiness to bless us in Christ; let it be the communing of a child with his father; and let it never be darkened by a shade of suspicion that the Hearer of prayer will not be faithful to His word.

It is the happy experience both of individuals and the Church to have occasional periods of fulfilment—it may be after long periods of expectation and trial. The patriarch Job had a terrible time of trial, when God seemed so untrue to His promises that he was sometimes on the very edge of blaspheming His name. But a time of fulfilment came at last, and through all the mystery of the past Job at length saw "the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy" (James v. 11). The aged Simeon and the aged Anna in the temple had waited long, but the hour came at last when all that they had been looking for was accomplished, and with a feeling of perfect satisfaction they could sing their "Nunc dimittis." The souls under the altar of them that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held, when they groaned out their sad "How long?" had still to wait a little season; but the time came when, clothed in white robes and with palms in their hands, they attained complete satisfaction, crying with a loud voice, "Salvation to our God that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb" (Rev. vi. 10, vii. 10). And in more recent times there have

been eras of fulfilment and corresponding rejoicing. When St. Augustine, after year upon year of restless tossing, at length found pardon and peace in Christ; when Columbus, after perils and privations innumerable, at length saw the dim coast which he had often prayed to behold; when Wilberforce heard the slave trade declared an illegal traffic, and Fowell Buxton saw the last fetter struck from the slave in the dominions of Great Britain; when Lord Shaftesbury found the ten hours factory bill turned into law; or when the friends of the slave learned that the President of the United States had signed the proclamation which set four millions at liberty—the old experience of Joshua's days seemed to be repeated, and gratitude to Him who had failed in no good thing was the one feeling that filled the heart. Sometimes the death-bed affords a retrospect that kindles the same emotion. The dying man looks along the way by which he has been led, and, with the walls of the New Jerusalem gleaming before him, he owns that he has been conducted by the right way to the city of habitation. The objects of earth and heaven are seen by him in a truer light. Valuations are made more accurately on the margin of eternity. The things that have been shaken and that have perished—of how little value are they seen to be, compared to the things that cannot be shaken! The loving purpose of Divine providence in shattering so many hopes, in defeating so many projects, in inflicting so much pain, is clearly apprehended. The heart is grieved that it was so near charging God foolishly when His purpose was really so merciful and so kind. The bright era of fulfilment is at hand; and even already, while the day is only dawning, the soul can give forth its testimony that "no good thing has failed of all that the Lord hath spoken."

And then at last will come the end of the mystery. The Lord shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the one end of heaven to the other. On the sea of glass mingled with fire they take their stand, having the harps of God, and sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints." What a scene and what a sensation! What joy in entering on possession of the Promised Land, in experiencing the rest of the redeemed, and in the consciousness that not a single enemy survives to annoy! What delight in the harmonious working of the new nature, in the free and happy play of all its faculties and feelings, and in the conscious presence of a God and Saviour to whose image you have been thoroughly conformed! The last shadow that dimmed your vision on earth shall have fled away; the last vestige of complaint of your earthly lot shall have vanished. Whatever you may have thought once, no other feeling will now occupy your heart but gratitude to Him who has not only not failed to fulfil all His promises, but has done in you exceeding abundantly above all that ye could ask or think!

CHAPTER XXX.

THE ALTAR ED.

JOSHUA xxii.

THE two tribes and a half had behaved well. They had kept their word, remained with their brethren during all Joshua's campaign, and taken their part in all the perils and struggles through which the host had passed. And now they receive the merited reward of honourable conduct. They are complimented by their general; their services are rehearsed with approval; their threefold fidelity, to God, to Moses, and to Joshua, is commended; they are dismissed with honour, and they receive as their reward a substantial share of the spoil which had been taken from the enemy. "Return," said Joshua, "with much riches unto your tents, and with very much cattle, with silver and with gold, and with brass, and with iron, and with very much raiment; divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren." It thus appeared that honour, like honesty, is the best policy. Had these two tribes and a half chosen the alternative of selfishness, refused to cross the Jordan to help their brethren, and devoted their whole energies at once to their fields and flocks, they would have fared worse in the end. No doubt as they recrossed the Jordan, bearing with them the treasure which had been acquired on the western side, their hearts would be full of that happy feeling which

results from duty faithfully performed, and honourable conduct amply rewarded. They brought back "peace with honour," and prosperity to the bargain. After all, it is high principle that pays. It demands a time of patient working and of patient waiting, but its bills are fully implemented in the end.

In sending away the two tribes and a half Joshua pressed two counsels on them. One was that they were to divide the spoil with those of their brethren that had remained at home. Here, again, selfishness might possibly have found a footing. Why should the men that had incurred none of the labour and the peril enjoy any of the spoil? Would it not have been fair that those who had borne the burden and heat of the day should alone enjoy its rewards? But, in point of fact, there had been good reason why a portion should remain at home. To leave the women and children wholly undefended would have been recklessness itself. Some arrangement, too, had to be made for looking after the flocks and herds. And as the supply of manna had ceased, the production of food had to be provided for. The men at home had been doing the duty assigned to them as well as the men abroad. If they could not establish a claim in justice to a share of the spoil, the spirit of brotherhood and generosity pleaded on their behalf. The soldier-section of the two and a half tribes had done their part honourably and generously to the nine and a half; let them act in the same spirit to their own brethren. Let them share in the good things which they had brought home, so that a spirit of joy and satisfaction might be diffused throughout the community, and the welcome given to those who had been absent might be cordial and complete, without one trace of discontent or envy.

Occasions may occur still on which this counsel of Joshua may come in very suitably. It does not always happen that brothers or near relatives who have prospered abroad are very mindful of those whom they have left at home. They like to enjoy their abundance, and if the case of their poor relations comes across their minds, they dismiss it with the thought that men's lots must differ, and that they are not going to lose all the benefit of their success by supporting other families besides their own. Yet, how much good might accrue from a little generosity, though it were but an occasional gift, towards those who are straitened? And how much better it would be to kindle by this means a thankful and kindly feeling, than to have envy and jealousy rankling in their hearts!

The other counsel of Joshua bore upon that which was ever uppermost in his heart—loyalty to God. "Take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the Lord charged you, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all His ways, and to keep all His commandments, and to cleave unto Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul." It is evident that Joshua poured his whole heart into this counsel. He was evidently anxious as to the effect which their separation from their brethren would have on their religious condition. It was west of the Jordan that the sanctuary had been placed, and that the great central influence in support of the national worship would mainly operate. Would not these eastern tribes be in great danger of drifting away from the recognised worship of God, and becoming idolaters? Joshua knew well that as yet the nation was far from being weaned from idolatry (see xxiv. 14). He knew that among many there were strong pro-

pensities towards it. He had something of the feeling that an earnest Christian parent would have in sending off a son, not very decided in religion, to some colony where the public sentiment was loose, and where the temptations to worldliness and religious indifference were strong. He was therefore all the more earnest in his exhortations to them, for he felt that all their prosperity, all their happiness, their very life itself, depended on their being faithful to their God.

We cannot tell how long time had elapsed when word was brought to the western side that the two and a half tribes had built a great altar on the edge of Jordan, apparently as a rival to the ecclesiastical establishment at Shiloh. That this was their intention seems to have been taken for granted, for we find the congregation or general assembly of Israel assembled at Shiloh to prepare for war with the schismatical tribes. War had evidently become a familiar idea with them, and at first no other course suggested itself for arresting the proposal. It was one of the many occasions of unreasoning impetuosity which the history of Israel presents.

No mention is made of Joshua in the narrative of this transaction; he had retired from active life, and perhaps what is here recorded did not take place for a considerable time after the return of the two and a half tribes. It may be that we have here an instance of the method so often pursued in Hebrew annals, of recording together certain incidents pertaining to the same transaction, or to the same people, though these incidents were separated from each other by a considerable interval of time.

It was well that the congregation assembled at Shiloh. They would be reminded by the very place that great

national movements were not to be undertaken rashly, since God was the supreme ruler of the nation. We are not told whether the usual method of asking counsel of God was resorted to, but certainly the course followed was more reasonable than rushing into war. It was resolved to begin by remonstrating with the two and a half tribes. The idea that their proposal was schismatical, nay, even idolatrous, was not given up, but it was thought that if a solemn remonstrance and warning were addressed to them, they might be induced to abandon their project.

A deputation was sent over, consisting of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest, as representing the religious interest, and ten princes, representing the ten tribes, to have an interview with the heads of the two and a half tribes. When they met, the deputation opened very fiercely on their brethren. They charged them with unheard-of wickedness. What they had done was a daring act of rebellion. It was worthy to be classed with the iniquity of Peor—one of the vilest deeds that ever disgraced the nation. It was fitted to bring down God's judgments on the whole nation, and would certainly do so. If the secret act of Achan involved the congregation in wrath, what calamity to the whole people would not result from this daring and open deed of rebellion? They were not safe for a single day. The vials of the Divine wrath could not but be ready, and in twenty-four hours the whole congregation of Israel might be overwhelmed by the tokens of His displeasure.

One should have said that if anything was fitted to have a bad effect on the two and a half tribes, it was this mode of dealing. It is not wise to assume that your brother is a villain. And scolding, as has been

well said, does not make men sorry for their sins. But one thing was said by the deputation that was fitted to have a different effect. "Notwithstanding, if the land of your possession be unclean, then pass ye over unto the land of the possession of the Lord, wherein the Lord's tabernacle dwelleth, and take possession among us: but rebel not against the Lord, nor rebel against us, in building you an altar beside the altar of the Lord our God."

Here was a generous, a self-denying proposal; the ten tribes were some of them in straits themselves, finding the room available for them far too narrow; nevertheless they were prepared to divide what they had with their brethren, if their real feeling was that the east side of the Jordan was outside the hallowed and hallowing influence of the presence of the Lord.

Instead, therefore, of firing up at the fierce reproof of their brethren, the two and a half tribes were softened by this really kind proposal and returned a reassuring answer. They solemnly repudiated all idea of a rival establishment. They knew that there was but one place where the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant could be, and they had not the remotest intention of interfering with the spot that had been chosen for that purpose. They had never entertained the thought of offering burnt offerings, or meat offerings, or peace offerings on their altar. They solemnly abjured all intention to show disrespect to the Lord, or to His law. The altar which they had built had a very different purpose. It was occasioned by the physical structure of the country, and the effect which that might have on their children in years to come. "In time to come your children might speak unto our children, saying, What have ye to do with the Lord

God of Israel? For the Lord hath made Jordan a border between us and you, ye children of Reuben and children of Gad; ye have no part in the Lord: so shall your children make our children cease from fearing the Lord. Therefore we said, Let us now prepare to build us an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice; but that it may be a witness between us, and you, and our generations after us." It was not a rival, but a witness, a pattern; a reminder to the two and a half tribes that the true altar, the Divine sanctuary, hallowed by the token of God's presence was elsewhere, and that there, and only there, were the public sacrifices to be offered.

The acquaintance with the physical structure of Palestine which we have obtained in recent years enables us to appreciate the feeling of the two and a half tribes better than could have been done before. The mere fact that a river separated the east from the west of Palestine would not have been enough to account for the sense of isolation and the fear thence arising which had taken hold of the heads of the two and a half tribes. It is the peculiar structure of the valley in which the river runs that explains the story. The Jordan valley, as has already been mentioned, is depressed below the level of the Mediterranean Sea, the depression increasing gradually as the river flows towards the Dead Sea, where it amounts to 1300 feet. In addition to this, the mountainous plateau on each side of the Jordan valley rises to the height of 2000 or 2500 feet above the sea, so that the entire depression, counting from the top of the plateau to the edge of the river, is between three and four thousand feet. On each side the approach to the Jordan is difficult, while, during the warm season, the great heat increases the

fatigue of travelling and discourages the attempt. All these things make the separation between the two parts of the country caused by the river and its valley much more complete than in ordinary cases of river boundaries. There can be no doubt now that the heads of the two and a half tribes had considerable ground for their apprehensions. There was some risk that they should cease to be regarded as part of the nation; and their explanation of the altar seems to have been an honest one. It was designed simply as a memorial, not for sacrifices. We see what a happy thing it was for the whole nation that the deputation was sent across before resorting to arms. A new light was thrown on what had seemed a daring sin; it was but an innocent arrangement; and the terrible forebodings which it awakened are at once scattered to the winds.

But who can estimate all the misery that has come in almost every age, in circles both public and private, from hasty suspicions of evil, which a little patience, a little inquiry, a little opportunity of explanation, might have at once averted? History, tradition, fiction, alike furnish us with instances. We recall the story of Llewellyn and his dog Gelert, stabbed by his master, who thought the stains upon his mouth were the blood of his beloved child; while, on raising the cradle which had been turned over, he found his child asleep and well, and a huge wolf dead, from whose fangs the dog had delivered him. We remember the tragedy of Othello and Desdemona; we see how the fondest love may be poisoned by hasty suspicion, and the dearest of wives murdered, when a little patience would have shown her innocent—shown her all too pure to come in contact with even a vestige of the evil thing. We think of the many stories of crusaders and others

leaving their homes with their love pledged to another, detained in distant lands without means of communication, hearing a rumour that their beloved one had turned false, and doing some rash and irrevocable deed, while a little further waiting would have realized all their hopes. But perhaps it is in less tragic circumstances that the spirit of suspicion and unjust accusation is most commonly manifested. A rumour unfavourable to your character gets into circulation; you suspect some one of being the author, and deal fiercely with him accordingly; it turns out that he is wholly innocent. A friend has apparently written a letter against you which has made you furious; you pour a torrent of reproaches upon him; it turns out that the letter was written by some one else with a similar name. But indeed there is no end to the mischief that is bred by impatience, and by want of inquiry, or of waiting for explanations that would put a quite different complexion on our matters of complaint. True charity "thinketh no evil," for it "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in truth. It beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." If its gentle voice were more regarded, what a multitude of offences would vanish, and how much wider would be the reign of peace!

The explanation that had been offered by Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh proved satisfactory to Phinehas and the princes of the congregation, and likewise to the people of the west generally, when the deputation reported their proceedings. The remark of Phinehas before he left his eastern brethren was a striking one: "This day do we perceive that the Lord is among us, because ye have not committed this trespass against the Lord; now ye have delivered the children of Israel

out of the hand of the Lord." There was a great difference between the Lord being among them, and their being in the hand of the Lord. If the Lord were among them they were under all manner of gracious influence; if they were in the hand of the Lord they were exposed to the utmost visitations of His wrath. It was the joy of Phinehas to find not only that no provocation had been given to God's righteous jealousy, but that proof had been afforded that He was graciously blessing them. If God often departs from us without our suspecting it, He is sometimes graciously present with us when we have been fearing that He was gone. So it was now. Phinehas in imagination had seen the gathering of a terrible storm, as if the very enemy of man had been stirring up his countrymen to rebellion and contempt of God; but in place of that, he sees that they have been consulting for God's honour, for the permanence of His institutions, and for the preservation of unity between the two sections of the nation; and in this he finds a proof that God has been graciously working among them. For God is the God of peace, not of strife, and the Spirit is the Spirit of order, and not of confusion. And when two sections of a community are led to desire the advancement of His service and the honour of His name, even by methods which are not in all respects alike, it is a proof that He is among them, drawing their hearts to Himself and to one another.

Perhaps the common adage might have been applied to the case—that there were faults on both sides. If the ten tribes were too hasty in preparing for war, the two and a half tribes had been too hasty in deciding on the erection of their altar, without communication with the priests and the civil heads of the nation. In

a matter so sacred, no such step should have been taken without full consultation and a clear view of duty. The goodness of their motive did not excuse them for not taking all available methods to carry out their plan in a way wholly unexceptional. As it was, they ran a great risk of kindling a fire which might have at once destroyed themselves and weakened the rest of the nation through all time. In their effort to promote unity, they had almost occasioned a fatal schism. Thus both sections of the nation had been on the edge of a fearful catastrophe.

But now it appeared that the section that had seemed to be so highly offending were animated by a quite loyal sentiment. Phinehas gladly seized on the fact as a proof that God was among them. A less godly man would not have thought of this as of much importance. He would hardly have believed in it as anything that could exist except in a fanatical imagination. But the more one knows of God the more real does the privilege seem, and the more blessed. Nay, it comes to be felt as that which makes the greatest conceivable difference between one individual or one community and another. The great curse of sin is that it has severed us from God. The glory of the grace of God in Christ is that we are brought together. Man without God is like the earth without the sun, or the body without the soul. Man in fellowship with God is man replenished with all Divine blessings and holy influences. A church in which God does not dwell is a hold of unclean spirits and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. A church inhabited by God, like the bride in the Song of Solomon, "looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

CHAPTER XXXI.

JEHOVAH THE CHAMPION OF ISRAEL.

JOSHUA xxiii.

THE last two chapters of Joshua are very like each other. Each professes to be a report of the aged leader's farewell meeting with the heads of the people. No place of meeting is specified in the one; Shechem is the place named in the other. The address reported in the twenty-third chapter is in somewhat general terms; in the twenty-fourth, we have more of detail. The question arises, Were there two meetings, or have we in these chapters different reports of the same? The question is of no great importance in itself; but it bears on the structure of the book. In our judgment, both reports bear on the same occasion; and if so, all that needs to be said as to their origin is, that the author of the book, having obtained two reports from trustworthy sources, did not adopt the plan of weaving them into one, but gave them separately, just as he had received them. The circumstance is a proof of the trustworthiness of the narrative; had the writer put on record merely what Joshua might be *supposed* to have said, he would not have adopted this twofold form of narrative.

Joshua had been a close follower of Moses in many things, and now he follows him by calling the people

together to hear his closing words. On the edge of the future life, on the eve of giving in his own account, in the crisis when men are most disposed to utter the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, he calls his children around him to hear his parting words. He knows, as Moses also knew, the impulsive, fitful temper of the people. All the more did he regard it as desirable not to omit such an opportunity of impression. "All pathetic occasions," it has been well said, "should be treasured in the memory; the last interview, the last sermon, the last prayer, the last fond, lingering look; all these things may be frivolously treated as sentimental; but he who treats them so is a fool in his heart. Whatever can subdue the spirit, chasten the character, and enlarge the charity of the soul, should be encouraged as a ministry from God."[1]

What was the burden of Joshua's address? What was alike the keynote, and the central note, and the closing note—the beginning, and the middle, and the end? You have it in the words—"The Lord your God is He that fighteth for you"; therefore "cleave unto the Lord your God." You owe everything to the Lord; therefore render to Him all His due. Let Him receive from you in the proportion in which He has given to you; let Him be honoured by you in the ratio in which you have been blessed by Him; and see that none of you ever, to the last day of your lives, give the faintest countenance to the idolatry of your neighbours, or consent to any entangling connection that would furnish a temptation to join in their wickedness.

This starting-point of Joshua's address—"The Lord

[1] "The People's Bible," by Joseph Parker.

your God is He that fighteth for you"—is a serious one, and demands careful investigation. God is expressly set forth as the champion of Israel, fighting for him against the Canaanites, and driving them out. He is here the God of battles; and the terrible desolation that followed the track of Israel is here ascribed to the championship of the Most High.

There are some expositors who explain these sayings in a general sense. There are great laws of conquest, they say, roughly sanctioned by Providence, whereby one race advances upon another. Nations enervated through luxury and idleness are usually supplanted by more vigorous races. The Goths and Vandals overcame the Romans; the Anglo-Saxons subdued the Britons, to be in time conquered by the Normans; Dutch rule has prevailed over the negro, English over the Hindu, American over the native Indian. In the treatment of the conquered races by the conquerors, there has often been much that is gross and objectionable. Even when a civilized and cultured race has had to deal with a barbarous one, instead of the sweetness and light of culture you have often had the devices of injustice and oppression. We cannot vindicate all the rule of the British in India; greed, insolence, and lust have left behind them many a stain. Still, the result on the whole has been for good. The English have a higher conception of human life than the Hindus. They have a higher sense of order, of justice, of family life, of national well-being. There is a vigour about them that will not tolerate the policy of drifting; that cannot stand still or lie still and see everything going wrong; that strives to remedy injustice, to reform abuse, to correct what is vicious and disorderly, and foster organization and progress. In

these respects British rule has been a benefit to India. There may have been deeds of oppression and wrong that curdle the blood, or habits of self-indulgence may have been practised at the expense of the natives that shock our sense of humanity, as if the inferior race could have no rights against the superior; but these are but the eddies or by-play of a great beneficent current, and in the summing up of the long account they hold but an insignificant place. In themselves, they are to be detested and denounced; but when you are estimating great national forces, when you are trying the question whether on the whole these forces have been beneficent or evil, whether they have been of heaven or of the devil, these episodes of wrong are not to be allowed to determine the whole question. You are constrained to take a wider view. And when you survey the grand result; when you see a great continent like India peaceable and orderly that used to be distracted on every side by domestic warfare; when you see justice carefully administered, life and property protected, education and civilization advanced, to say nothing of the spirit of Christianity introduced, you are unable to resist the conclusion that the influence of its new masters has been a gain to India, and therefore that the British rule has had the sanction of heaven.

We say there are some expositors who hold that it is only in a way parallel to this that the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites enjoyed the sanction of God. Without making a great deal of the wickedness of the Canaanite tribes, they dwell on their weakness, their poor ideas of life, their feeble aims, their want of developing power, their inability to rise. Into the heart of these tribes there comes a race that some-

how possesses extraordinary capabilities and force. History has shown it to be one of the great dominant races of the world. The new people apply themselves with extraordinary energy to acquire the country of the other. Dispossession of one race by another was the common practice of the times, and in a moral point of view was little thought of. The times were rude and wild, property had not become sacred, human life was cheap, pain and suffering got small consideration. Having spent some centuries in Egypt, the new race brought with it a share of Egyptian culture and accomplishment; but its great strength lay in its religious ardour, and in the habits of order and self-control which its religion fostered. The memory of their ancestors, who had dwelt as pilgrims in that country, but under the strongest promises on the part of God that He would give it as an inheritance to their descendants, increased the ardour of the invasion and the confidence of the invaders. With all the enthusiasm of a heaven-guided race, they dashed against the old inhabitants, who staggered under the blow. To a large extent the former occupants fell under the usual violence of invaders—the sword of battle and the massacre after victory. The process was accompanied by many wild deeds, which in these days of ours would excite horror. Had it been completely successful it would have utterly annihilated the native races; but the courage and perseverance of the invaders were not equal to this result; many of the original inhabitants remained, and were finally amalgamated with their conquerors.

Now, in this case, as in the conquest of India by Britain, a process went on which was a great benefit on a large scale. It was not designed to be of benefit

to the original inhabitants, as was the British occupation of India, for they were a doomed race, as we shall immediately see. But the settlement of the people of Israel in Canaan was designed and was fitted to be a great benefit to the world. Explain it as we may, Israel had higher ideas of life than the other nations, richer gifts of head and heart, more capacity of governing, and a far purer religious sentiment. Wherever Israel might be planted, if he remained in purity, mankind must be benefited. A people so gifted, with such intellectual capacity, with such moral and spiritual power, with such high ideals, and producing from time to time men of such remarkable character and influence, could not but help to elevate other races. That such a people should prevail over tribes emasculated by vice, degraded by idolatrous superstition, and enfeebled and stunted through mutual strife, was only in accordance with the nature of things. On the principle that a race like this must necessarily prevail over such tribes as had occupied Palestine before, the conquest of Joshua might well be said to have Divine approval. God might truly be said to go forth with the armies of Israel, and to scatter their enemies as smoke is scattered by the wind.

But this was not all. There was already a judicial sentence against the seven nations of which Israel was appointed to be the executioner. Even in Abraham's time we have abundant proof that they were far gone in corruption, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was but an early stroke of that holy sword which was to come down over a far wider area when the iniquity of the Amorites should become full. We have no elaborate account of the moral and religious condition of the people in Joshua's time, but we have

certain glimpses which tell much. In the story of Baal-peor we have an awful picture of the idolatrous debauchery of the Moabites; and the Moabites were not so sunk in vice as the Canaanites. The first Canaanite house that any of the Israelites entered was that of an immoral woman, who, however, was saved by her faith, as any and every Canaanite would have been had he believed. The most revolting picture we have of Canaanite vice is connected with the burning of children alive in sacrifice to the gods. What a hideous practice it was! Who can estimate its effect on the blithe nature of children, or tell how the very thought of it and the possibility of suffering from it must have weighed like a nightmare on many a child, converting the season of merry childhood into a time of dreadful foreboding, if not for themselves, at least for some of their companions. Loathsome vice consecrated by the seal of religion; unnatural lust, turning human beings into worse than beasts; natural affection converted into an instrument of the most horrid cruelty—could any practices show more powerfully the hopeless degradation of these nations in a moral and religious sense, or their ripeness for judgment? Israel was the appointed executioner of God's justice against them, and in order that Israel might fulfil that function, God went before him in his battles and delivered his enemies into his hands. And what Israel did in this way was done under a solemn sense that he was inflicting Divine retribution. That the process was carried out with something of the solemnity of an execution appears, as we have already seen, from the injunction at Jericho, which forbade all on pain of death to touch an atom of the spoil. And this lesson was burnt into their inmost souls by the terrible

fate of Achan. Afterwards, it is true, they were allowed to appropriate the spoil, but not till after they had been taught most impressively at Jericho that the spoil was God's, so that, even when it became theirs, it was as if they had received it from His hand.

We cannot suppose that the people uniformly acted with the moderation and self-restraint becoming God's executioners. No doubt there were many instances of unwarrantable and inhuman violence. Such excesses are unavoidable when human beings are employed as the executioners of God. To charge these on God is not fair. They were the spots and stains that ever indicate the hand of man, even when doing the work of God. It is not necessary to approve of these while we vindicate the law which doomed the Canaanites to extermination, and made the Israelites their executioners. It is not necessary to vindicate all that the English have done in India, while we hold that their presence and influence there have been in accordance with a Divine and beneficent purpose. Where God and man are in partnership, we may expect a chequered product, but never let us ascribe the flaws of one to the influence of the other.

If it be said that the language of the historian seems sometime to ascribe to God what really arose from the passions of the people, it is to be observed that we are not told in what form the Lord communicated His commands. No doubt the Hebrews were disposed to claim Divine authority for what they did to the very fullest extent. There may have been times when they imagined that they were fulfilling the requirements of God, when they were only giving effect to feelings of their own. And generally they may have been prone to suppose that modes of slaughter that seemed to them

quite proper were well pleasing in the sight of God. They may have believed that God participated in what was in reality but the spirit of the age. Thus they may have been led to think, and through them the impression may have come to us, that God had a more active hand, so to speak, in many of the details of warfare than we ought to ascribe to Him. For God often accomplishes His holy purposes by leaving His instruments to act in their own way.

But we have wandered from Joshua, and the assembly of Israel. What we have been trying is to show the soundness of Joshua's fundamental position—that God fought for Israel. The same thing might be shown by a negative process. If God had not been actively and supernaturally with Israel, Israel could never have become what he was. What made Israel so remarkable and powerful a nation? If you appeal to heredity and go back to his forefather, you find the whole career of Abraham determined by what he undoubtedly regarded as a supernatural promise, that in him and his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed. If you speak of Moses as the founder of the nation, you find a man who was utterly defeated and humiliated when he acted on his own resources, and successful only when he came in contact with supernatural might. If you inquire into the cause of the military superiority of Israel, you cannot find it in their slave condition in Egypt, nor in their wandering, pastoral life in the desert. You are baffled in trying to account for the warlike energy and skill that swept the Canaanites with all their resources before their invincible might. That an Alexander the Great, or a Cæsar, or a Napoleon, with their long experience, their trained legions, their splendid prestige and unrivalled resources, should have swept

the board of their enemies we do not wonder. But Moses and his bevy of slaves, Joshua and his army of shepherds—what could have made such soldiers of these men if the Lord had not fought on their side?

The getting possession of Canaan, as Joshua reminded the people, was a threefold process: God fighting for them had subdued their enemies; Joshua had divided the land; and now God was prepared to expel the remaining people, but only through their instrumentality. Emphasis is laid on "expelling" and "driving out" (ver. 5), from which we gather that further massacre was not to take place, but that the remainder of the Canaanites must seek settlements elsewhere. A sufficient retribution had fallen on them for their sins, in the virtual destruction of their people and the loss of their country; the miserable remnant might have a chance of escape, in some ill-filled country where they would never rise to influence and where terror would restrain them from their former wickedness.

Joshua was very emphatic in forbidding intermarriage and friendly social intercourse with Canaanites. He saw much need for the prayer, "Lead us not into temptation." He understood the meaning of enchanted ground. He knew that between the realm of holiness and the realm of sin there is a kind of neutral territory, which belongs strictly to neither, but which slopes towards the realm of sin, and in point of fact most commonly furnishes recruits not a few to the army of evil. Alas, how true is this still! Marriages between believers and unbelievers; friendly social fellowship, on equal terms, between the Church and the world; partnership in business between the godly and the ungodly—who does not know the usual result? In a few solitary cases, it may be, the child of the world is

brought into the kingdom; but in how many instances do we find the buds of Christian promise nipped, and lukewarmness and backsliding, if not apostasy, coming in their room! There is no better help for the Christian life, no greater encouragement to fellowship with God, than congenial fellowship with other Christians, especially in the home, as there is no greater hindrance to these things than an alien spirit there. And if men and women would remember that of all that concerns them in this life their relation to God is infinitely the most momentous, and that whatever brings that relation into peril is the evil of all others most to be dreaded, we should not find them so ready for entangling connections which may be a gain for the things of this world, but for the things of eternity are commonly a grievous loss.

It is a very vivid picture that Joshua draws of the effects of that sinful compromise with their Canaanite neighbours against which he had warned them. "If ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you: know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you."

The Garden of Eden was not the only paradise that sin ruined. Here was something like a new paradise for the children of Israel; and yet there was a possibility—more than a possibility—of its being ruined by sin. The history of the future showed that Joshua was right. The Canaanites remaining in the land were

scourges and thorns to the people of Israel, and the compliance of Israel with their idolatrous ways led first to invasion and oppression, then to captivity and exile, and finally to dispersion over the face of the earth. However sin may deceive at the beginning, in the end it always proves true to its real character—"the wages of sin is death." The trouble is that men will not believe what they do not like to believe. Sin has many a pleasure; and as long as the pleasure is not gross, but wears an air of refinement, there seems no harm in it, and it is freely enjoyed. But, unseen, it works like dry-rot, pulverising the soul, destroying all traces of spiritual relish or enjoyment of Divine things, and attaching the heart more strongly to mere material good. And sometimes when death comes in sight and it is felt that God has to be reckoned with, and the effort is honestly made to prepare for that solemn meeting by looking to the Divine Redeemer, the bent of the heart is found to be entirely the other way. Faith and repentance will not come; turning Godwards is an uncongenial, an impossible attitude; the heart has its roots too much in the world to be thus withdrawn from it. They allowed themselves to be drawn away from their early hope by the influence of worldly fellowship, to find that it profits a man nothing to gain the whole world if he lose his own soul.

How awful are the words of St. James: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

CHAPTER XXXII.

JOSHUA'S LAST APPEAL.

JOSHUA xxiv.

IT was at Shechem that Joshua's last meeting with the people took place. The Septuagint makes it Shiloh in one verse (ver. 1), but Shechem in another (ver. 25); but there is no sufficient reason for rejecting the common reading. Joshua might feel that a meeting which was not connected with the ordinary business of the sanctuary, but which was more for a personal purpose, a solemn leave-taking on his part from the people, might be held better at Shechem. There was much to recommend that place. It lay a few miles to the north-west of Shiloh, and was not only distinguished (as we have already said) as Abraham's first resting-place in the country, and the scene of the earliest of the promises given in it to him; but likewise as the place where, between Mounts Ebal and Gerizim, the blessings and curses of the law had been read out soon after Joshua entered the land, and the solemn assent of the people given to them. And whereas it is said (ver. 26) that the great stone set up as a witness was "by the sanctuary of the Lord," this stone may have been placed at Shiloh after the meeting, because there it would be more fully in the observation of the people as they came up to the annual festivals (see 1 Sam. i. 7, 9). Shechem was therefore the scene of Joshua's

farewell address. Possibly it was delivered close to the well of Jacob and the tomb of Joseph; at the very place where, many centuries later, the New Testament Joshua sat wearied with His journey, and unfolded the riches of Divine grace to the woman of Samaria.

1. In the record of Joshua's speech contained in the twenty-fourth chapter, he begins by rehearsing the history of the nation. He has an excellent reason for beginning with the revered name of Abraham, because Abraham had been conspicuous for that very grace, loyalty to Jehovah, which he is bent on impressing on them. Abraham had made a solemn choice in religion. He had deliberately broken with one kind of worship, and accepted another. His fathers had been idolaters, and he had been brought up an idolater. But Abraham renounced idolatry for ever. He did this at a great sacrifice, and what Joshua entreated of the people was, that they would be as thorough and as firm as he was in their repudiation of idolatry. The rehearsal of the history is given in the words of God to remind them that the whole history of Israel had been planned and ordered by Him. He had been among them from first to last; He had been with them through all the lives of the patriarchs; it was He that had delivered them from Egypt by Moses and Aaron, that had buried the Egyptians under the waters of the sea, that had driven the Amorites out of the eastern provinces, had turned the curse of Balaam into a blessing, had dispossessed the seven nations, and had settled the Israelites in their pleasant and peaceful abodes.

We mark in this rehearsal the well-known features of the national history, as they were always represented; the frank recognition of the supernatural, with no indication of myth or legend, with nothing of the mist or

glamour in which the legend is commonly enveloped. And, seeing that God had done all this for them, the inference was that He was entitled to their heartiest loyalty and obedience. "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve Him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord." It seems strange that at that very time the people needed to be called to put away other gods. But this only shows how destitute of foundation the common impression is, that from and after the departure from Egypt the whole host of Israel were inclined to the law as it had been given by Moses. There was still a great amount of idolatry among them, and a strong tendency towards it. They were not a wholly reformed or converted people. This Joshua knew right well; he knew that there was a suppressed fire among them liable to burst into a conflagration; hence his aggressive attitude, and his effort to foster an aggressive spirit in them; he must bind them over by every consideration to renounce wholly all recognition of other gods, and to make Jehovah the one only object of their worship. Never was a good man more in earnest, or more thoroughly persuaded that all that made for a nation's welfare was involved in the course which he pressed upon them.

2. But Joshua did not urge this merely on the strength of his own conviction. He must enlist their reason on his side; and for this cause he now called on them deliberately to weigh the claims of other gods and the advantages of other modes of worship, and choose that which must be pronounced the best. There were four claimants to be considered: (1) Jehovah; (2) the Chaldæan gods worshipped by their ancestors;

(3) the gods of the Egyptians; and (4) the gods of the Amorites among whom they dwelt. Make your choice between these, said Joshua, if you are dissatisfied with Jehovah. But could there be any reasonable choice between these gods and Jehovah? It is often useful, when we hesitate as to a course, to set down the various reasons for and against,—it may be the reasons of our judgment against the reasons of our feelings; for often this course enables us to see how utterly the one outweighs the other. May it not be useful for us to do as Joshua urged Israel to do?

If we set down the reasons for making God, God in Christ, the supreme object of our worship, against those in favour of the world, how infinitely will the one scale outweigh the other! In the choice of a master, it is reasonable for a servant to consider which has the greatest claim upon him; which is intrinsically the most worthy to be served; which will bring him the greatest advantages; which will give him most inward satisfaction and peace; which will exercise the best influence on his character, and which comes recommended most by old servants whose testimony ought to weigh with him. If these are the grounds of a reasonable choice in the case of a servant engaging with a master, how much more in reference to the Master of our spirits! Nothing can be plainer than that the Israelites in Joshua's time had every conceivable reason for choosing their fathers' God as the supreme object of their worship, and that any other course would have been alike the guiltiest and the silliest that could have been taken. Are the reasons a whit less powerful why every one of us should devote heart and life and mind and soul to the service of Him who gave Himself for us, and has loved us with an everlasting love?

3. But Joshua is fully prepared to add example to precept. Whatever you do in this matter, my mind is made up, my course is clear—"as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah." He reminds us of a general exhorting his troops to mount the deadly breach and dash into the enemy's citadel. Strong and urgent are his appeals; but stronger and more telling is his act when, facing the danger right in front, he rushes on, determined that, whatever others may do, he will not flinch from his duty. It is the old Joshua back again, the Joshua that alone with Caleb stood faithful amid the treachery of the spies, that has been loyal to God all his life, and now in the decrepitude of old age is still prepared to stand alone rather than dishonour the living God. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." He was happy in being able to associate his house with himself as sharing his convictions and his purpose. He owed this, in all likelihood, to his own firm and intrepid attitude throughout his life. His house saw how consistently and constantly he recognised the supreme claims of Jehovah. Not less clearly did they see how constantly he experienced the blessedness of his choice.

4. Convinced by his arguments, moved by his eloquence, and carried along by the magnetism of his example, the people respond with enthusiasm, deprecate the very thought of forsaking Jehovah to serve other gods, and recognise most cordially the claims he has placed them under, by delivering them from Egypt, preserving them in the wilderness, and driving out the Amorites from their land. After this an ordinary leader would have felt quite at ease, and would have thanked God that his appeal had met with such a response, and that such demonstration had been given

of the loyalty of the people. But Joshua knew something of their fickle temper. He may have called to mind the extraordinary enthusiasm of their fathers when the tabernacle was in preparation; the singular readiness with which they had contributed their most valued treasures, and the grievous change they underwent after the return of the spies. Even an enthusiastic burst like this is not to be trusted. He must go deeper; he must try to induce them to think more earnestly of the matter, and not trust to the feeling of the moment.

5. Hence he draws a somewhat dark picture of Jehovah's character. He dwells on those attributes which are least agreeable to the natural man, His holiness, His jealousy, and His inexorable opposition to sin. When he says, "He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins," he cannot mean that God is not a God of forgiveness. He cannot wish to contradict the first part of that gracious memorial which God gave to Moses: "The Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." His object is to emphasize the clause, "and that will by no means clear the guilty." Evidently he means that the sin of idolatry is one that God cannot pass over, cannot fail to punish, until, probably through terrible judgments, the authors of it are brought to contrition, and humble themselves in the dust before him. "Ye cannot serve the Lord," said Joshua; "take care how you undertake what is beyond your strength!" Perhaps he wished to impress on them the need of Divine strength for so difficult a duty. Certainly he did not change their purpose, but only drew from them a more resolute expression. "Nay; but we will serve the Lord.

And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen the Lord to serve Him. And they said, We are witnesses."

6. And now Joshua comes to a point which had doubtless been in his mind all the time, but which he had been waiting for a favourable opportunity to bring forward. He had pledged the people to an absolute and unreserved service of God, and now he demands a practical proof of their sincerity. He knows quite well that they have "strange gods" among them. Teraphim, images, or ornaments having a reference to the pagan gods, he knows that they possess. And he does not speak as if this were a rare thing, confined to a very few. He speaks as if it were a common practice, generally prevalent. Again we see how far from the mark we are when we think of the whole nation as cordially following the religion of Moses, in the sense of renouncing all other gods. Minor forms of idolatry, minor recognitions of the gods of the Chaldæans and the Egyptians and the Amorites, were prevalent even yet. Probably Joshua called to mind the scene that had occurred at that very place hundreds of years before, when Jacob, rebuked by God, and obliged to remove from Shechem, called on his household: "Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments. . . . And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in the land, and all the ear-rings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem." Alas! that, centuries later, it was necessary for Joshua in the same place to issue the same order,—Put away the gods which are among you, and serve ye the Lord. What a weed sin is, and how it is for ever reappearing! And reappearing among ourselves too, in a different variety, but

essentially the same. For what honest and earnest heart does not feel that there are idols and images among ourselves that interfere with God's claims and God's glory as much as the teraphim and the ear-rings of the Israelites did? The images of the Israelites were little images, and it was probably at by-times and in retirement that they made use of them; and so, it may not be on the leading occasions or in the outstanding work of our lives that we are wont to dishonour God. But who that knows himself but must think with humiliation of the numberless occasions on which he indulges little whims or inclinations without thinking of the will of God; the many little acts of his daily life on which conscience is not brought to bear; the disengaged state of his mind from that supreme controlling influence which would bear on it if God were constantly recognised as his Master? And who does not find that, despite his endeavour from time to time to be more conscientious, the old habit, like a weed whose roots have only been cut over, is ever showing itself alive?

7. And now comes the closing and clinching transaction of this meeting at Shechem. Joshua enters into a formal covenant with the people; he records their words in the book of the law of the Lord; he takes a great stone and sets it up under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord; and he constitutes the stone a witness, as if it had heard all that had been spoken by the Lord to them and by them to the Lord. The covenant was a transaction invested with special solemnity among all Eastern peoples, and especially among the Israelites. Many instances had occurred in their history, of covenants with God, and of other covenants, like that of Abraham with Abimelech, or

that of Jacob with Laban. The wanton violation of a covenant was held an act of gross impiety, deserving the reprobation alike of God and man. When Joshua got the people bound by a transaction of this sort, he seemed to obtain a new guarantee for their fidelity; a new barrier was erected against their lapsing into idolatry. It was natural for him to expect that some good would come of it, and no doubt it contributed to the happy result; "for Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders which overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord that He had done for Israel." And yet it was but a temporary barrier against a flood which seemed ever to be gathering strength unseen, and preparing for another fierce discharge of its disastrous waters.

At the least, this meeting secured for Joshua a peaceful sunset, and enabled him to sing his "Nunc dimittis." The evil which he dreaded most was not at work as the current of life ebbed away from him; it was his great privilege to look round him and see his people faithful to their God. It does not appear that Joshua had any very comprehensive or far-reaching aims with reference to the moral training and development of the people. His idea of religion seems to have been, a very simple loyalty to Jehovah, in opposition to the perversions of idolatry. It is not even very plain whether or not he was much impressed by the capacity of true religion to pervade all the relations and engagements of men, and brighten and purify the whole life. We are too prone to ascribe all the virtues to the good men of the Old Testament, forgetting that of many virtues there was only a progressive development, and that it is not reasonable to look for excellence beyond the

measure of the age. Joshua was a soldier, a soldier of the Old Testament, a splendid man for his day, but not beyond his day. As a soldier, his business was to conquer his enemies, and to be loyal to his heavenly Master. It did not lie to him to enforce the numberless bearings which the spirit of trust in God might have on all the interests of life—on the family, on books, on agriculture and commerce, or on the development of the humanities, and the courtesies of society. Other men were raised up from time to time, many other men, with commission from God to devote their energies to such matters.

It is quite possible that, under Joshua, religion did not appear in very close relation to many things that are lovely and of good report. A celebrated English writer (Matthew Arnold) has asked whether, if Virgil or Shakespeare had sailed in the *Mayflower* with the puritan fathers, they would have found themselves in congenial society. The question is not a fair one, for it supposes that men whose destiny was to fight as for very life, and for what was dearer than life, were of the same mould with others who could devote themselves in peaceful leisure to the amenities of literature. Joshua had doubtless much of the ruggedness of the early soldier, and it is not fair to blame him for want of sweetness and light. Very probably it was from him that Deborah drew somewhat of her scorn, and Jael, the wife of Heber, of her rugged courage. The whole Book of Judges is penetrated by his spirit. He was not the apostle of charity or gentleness. He had one virtue, but it was the supreme virtue—he honoured God. Wherever God's claims were involved, he could see nothing, listen to nothing, care for nothing, but that He should obtain His due. Wherever God's

claims were acknowledged and fulfilled, things were essentially right, and other interests would come right. For his absolute and supreme loyalty to his Lord he is entitled to our highest reverence. This loyalty is a rare virtue, in the sublime proportions in which it appeared in him. When a man honours God in this way, he has something of the appearance of a supernatural being, rising high above the fears and the feebleness of poor humanity. He fills his fellows with a sort of awe.

Among the reformers, the puritans, and the covenanters such men were often found. The best of them, indeed, were men of this type, and very genuine men they were. They were not men whom the world loved; they were too jealous of God's claims for that, and too severe on those who refused them. And we have still the type of the fighting Christian. But alas! it is a type subject to fearful degeneration. Loyalty to human tradition is often substituted, unconsciously no doubt, for loyalty to God. The sublime purity and nobility of the one passes into the obstinacy, the self-righteousness, the self-assertion of the other. When a man of the genuine type does appear, men are arrested, astonished, as if by a supernatural apparition. The very rareness, the eccentricity of the character, secures a respectful homage. And yet, who can deny that it is the true representation of what every man should be who says, "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth"?

After a life of a hundred and ten years the hour comes when Joshua must die. We have no record of the inner workings of his spirit, no indication of his feelings in view of his sins, no hint as to the source of his trust for forgiveness and acceptance. But we readily

think of him as the heir of the faith of his father Abraham, the heir of the righteousness that is by faith, and as passing calmly into the presence of his Judge, because, like Jacob, he has waited for His salvation. He was well entitled to the highest honours that the nation could bestow on his memory; for all owed to him their homes and their rest. His name must ever be coupled with that of the greatest hero of the nation: Moses led them out of the house of bondage; Joshua led them into the house of rest. Sometimes, as we have already said, it has been attempted to draw a sharp antithesis between Moses and Joshua, the one as representing the law, and the other as representing the gospel. The antithesis is more in word than in deed. Moses represented both gospel and law, for he brought the people out of the bondage of Egypt; he brought them to their marriage altar, and he unfolded to the bride the law of her Divine husband's house. Joshua conducted the bride to her home, and to the rest which she was to enjoy there; but he was not less emphatic than Moses in insisting that she must be an obedient wife, following the law of her husband. It were difficult to say which of them was the more instructive type of Christ, both in feeling and in act. The love of each for his people was most intense, most self-denying; and neither of them, had he been called on, would have hesitated to surrender his life for their sake.

It is probably a mere incidental arrangement that the book concludes with a record of the burial of Joseph, and of the death and burial of Eleazar, the son of Aaron. In point of time, we can hardly suppose that the burial of Joseph in the field of his father Jacob

in Shechem was delayed till after the death of Joshua. It would be a most suitable transaction after the division of the country, and especially after the territory that contained the field had been assigned to Ephraim, Joseph's son. It would be like a great doxology—a Te Deum celebration of the fulfilment of the promise in which, so many centuries before, Joseph had so nobly shown his trust.

But why did not Joseph's bones find their resting-place in the time-honoured cave of Macpelah? Why was he not laid side by side with his father, who would doubtless have liked right well that his beloved son should be laid at his side? We can only say in regard to Joseph as in regard to Rachel, that the right of burial in that tomb seems to have been limited to the wife who was recognised by law, and to the son who inherited the Messianic promise. The other members of the family must have their resting-place elsewhere; moreover, there was this benefit in Joseph having his burial-place at Shechem, that it was in the very centre of the country, and near the spot where the tribes were to assemble for the great annual festivals. For many a generation the tomb of Joseph would be a memorable witness to the people; by it the patriarch, though dead, would continue to testify to the faithfulness of God; while he would point the hopes of the godly people still onward to the future, when the last clause of the promise to Abraham would be emphatically fulfilled, and that Seed would come forth among them in whom all the families of the earth would be blessed.

Was there a reason for recording the death of Eleazar? Certainly there was a fitness in placing together the record of the death of Joshua and the death of Eleazar. For Joshua was the successor of

Moses, and Eleazar was the successor of Aaron. The simultaneous mention of the death of both is a significant indication that the generation to which they belonged had now passed away. A second age after the departure from Egypt had now slipped into the silent past. It was a token that the duties and responsibilities of life had now come to a new generation, and a silent warning to them to remember how

> "Time like an ever-rolling stream
> Bears all its sons away;
> They fly forgotten, as a dream
> Dies at the opening day."

How short the life of a generation seems when we look back to these distant days! How short the life of the individual when he realizes that his journey is practically ended! How vain the expectation once cherished of an indefinite future, when there would be ample time to make up for all the neglects of earlier years! God give us all to know the true meaning of that word, "the time is short," and "so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

JOSHUA'S WORK FOR ISRAEL.

IT now only remains for us to take a retrospective view of the work of Joshua, and indicate what he did for Israel and the mark he left on the national history.

1. Joshua was a soldier—a believing soldier. He was the first of a type that has furnished many remarkable specimens. Abraham had fought, but he had fought as a quaker might be induced to fight, for he was essentially a man of peace. Moses had superintended military campaigns, but Moses was essentially a priest and a prophet. Joshua was neither quaker, nor priest, nor prophet, but simply a soldier. There were fighting men in abundance, no doubt, before the flood, but so far as we know, not believing men. Joshua was the first of an order that seems to many a moral paradox—a devoted servant of God, yet an enthusiastic fighter. His mind ran naturally in the groove of military work. To plan expeditions, to devise methods of attacking, scattering, or annihilating opponents, came naturally to him. A military genius, he entered *con amore* into his work.

Yet along with this the fear of God continually controlled and guided him. He would do nothing deliberately unless he was convinced that it was the will of

God. In all his work of slaughter, he believed himself to be fulfilling the righteous purposes of Jehovah. His life was habitually guided by regard to the unseen. He had no ambition but to serve his God and to serve his country. He would have been content with the plainest conditions of life, for his habits were simple and his tastes natural. He believed that God was behind him, and the belief made him fearless. His career of almost unbroken success justified his faith.

There have been soldiers who were religious in spite of their being soldiers—some of them in their secret hearts regretting the distressing fortune that made the sword their weapon; but there have also been men whose energy in religion and in fighting have supported and strengthened each other. Such men, however, are usually found only in times of great moral and spiritual struggle, when the brute force of the world has been mustered in overwhelming mass to crush some religious movement. They have an intense conviction that the movement is of God, and as to the use of the sword, they cannot help themselves; they have no choice, for the instinct of self-defence compels them to draw it. Such are the warriors of the Apocalypse, the soldiers of Armageddon; for though their battle is essentially spiritual, it is presented to us in that military book under the symbols of material warfare. Such were the Ziskas and Procopses of the Bohemian reformation; the Gustavus Adolphuses of the Thirty Years' War; the Cromwells of the Commonwealth, and the General Leslies of the Covenant. Ruled supremely by the fear of God, and convinced of a Divine call to their work, they have communed about it with Him as closely and as truly as the missionary about his preaching or his translating, or the philanthropist about his homes or

his rescue agencies. To God's great goodness it has ever been their habit to ascribe their successes; and when an enterprise has failed, the causes of failure have been sought for in the Divine displeasure. Nor in their intercourse with their families and friends have they been usually wanting in gentler graces, in affection, in generosity, or in pity. All this must be freely admitted, even by those to whom war is most obnoxious. It is quite consistent with the conviction that a large proportion of wars has been utterly unjustifiable, and that in ordinary circumstances the sword is no more to be regarded as the right and proper weapon for settling the quarrels of nations than the duel for settling the quarrels of individuals. And the best of soldiers cannot but feel that fighting is at best a cruel necessity, and that it will be a happy day for the world when men shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks.

2. Being a soldier, Joshua confined himself in the main to the work of a soldier. That work was to conquer the enemy and to divide the land. To these two departments he limited himself, in subordination, however, to his deep conviction that they were only means to an end, and that that end would be utterly missed unless the people were pervaded by loyalty to God and devotion to the mode of worship which He had prescribed. No opportunity of impressing that consideration on their minds was neglected. It lay at the root of all their prosperity; and if Joshua had not pressed it on them by every available means, all his work would have been like pouring water on sand or sowing seed upon the rocks of the seashore.

Joshua was not called to ecclesiastical work, certainly not in the sense of carrying out ecclesiastical details

That department belonged to the high priest and his brethren. While Moses lived, it had been under him, because Moses was head of all departments. Neither did Joshua take in hand the arrangement in detail of the civil department of the commonwealth. That was mainly work for the elders and officers appointed to regulate it. It is from the circumstance that Joshua personally confined himself to his two great duties, that the book which bears his name travels so little beyond these. Reading Joshua alone, we might have the impression that very little attention was paid to the ritual enacted in the books of Moses. We might suppose that but little was done to carry out the provisions of the Torah, as the law came to be called. But the inference would not be warranted, for the plain reason that such things did not come within the sphere of Joshua or the scope of the book which bears his name. We may make what we can of incidental allusions, but we need not expect elaborate descriptions. There are many things that it would have been highly interesting for us to know regarding this period of the history of Israel; but the book limits itself as Joshua limited himself. It is not a full history of the times. It is not a chapter of universal national annals. It is a history of the settlement, and of Joshua's share in the settlement.

And the fact that it has this character is a testimony to its authenticity. Had it been a work of much later date, it is not likely that it would have been confined within such narrow limits. It would in all likelihood have presented a much larger view of the state and progress of the nation than the existing book does. The fact that it is made to revolve so closely round Joshua seems to indicate that Joshua's personality was

still a great power; the remembrance of him was bright and vivid when the book was written. Moreover, the lists of names, many of which seem to have been the old Canaanite names, and to have dropped out of the Hebrew history because the cities were not actually taken from the Canaanites, and did not become Hebrew cities, is another testimony to the contemporary date of the book, or of the documents on which it is founded.

3. If we examine carefully Joshua's character as a soldier, or rather as a strategist, we shall probably find that he had one defect. He does not appear to have succeeded in making his conquests permanent. What he gained one day was often won back by the enemy after a little time. To read the account of what happened after the victory of Gibeon and Bethhoron, one would infer that all the region south of Gibeon fell completely into his hands. Yet by-and-by we find Hebron and Jerusalem in possession of the enemy, while a hitherto unheard-of king has come into view, Adonibezek, of Bezek, of whose people there were slain, after the death of Joshua, ten thousand men (Judg. i. 4). With regard to Hebron we read first that Joshua "fought against it and took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and the king thereof, and all the cities thereof, and all the souls that were therein; he left none remaining, but destroyed it utterly, and all the souls that were therein" (Josh. x. 37). Yet not long after, when Caleb requested Hebron for his inheritance, it was (as we have seen) on the very ground that it was strongly held by the enemy: "if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said" (xiv. 12). Again, in the campaign against Jabin, King of Hazor, while it is said that Hazor was utterly destroyed, it is also said that Joshua

did not destroy "the cities that stood on their mounds" (xi. 13, R.V.); accordingly we find that some time after, another Jabin was at the head of a restored Hazor, and it was against him that the expedition to which Barak was stimulated by the prophetess Deborah was undertaken (Judg. iv. 2). Whether Joshua miscalculated the number and resources of the Canaanites in the country; or whether he was unable to divide his own forces so as to prevent the re-occupation and restoration of places that had once been destroyed; or whether he over-estimated the effects of his first victories and did not allow enough for the determination of a conquered people to fight for their homes and their altars to the last, we cannot determine; but certainly the result was, that after being defeated and scattered at the first, they rallied and gathered together, and presented a most formidable problem to the tribes in their various settlements. There is no reason for resorting to the explanation of our modern critics that we have here traces of two writers, of whom the policy of the one was to represent that Joshua was wholly victorious, and of the other that he was very far from successful. The true view is, that his first invasion, or run-over, as it may be called, was a complete success, but that, through the rallying of his opponents, much of the ground which he gained at the beginning was afterwards lost.

4. The great service of Joshua to his people (as we have already remarked) was, that he gave them a settlement. He gave them—Rest. Some, indeed, may be disposed to question whether that which Joshua did give them was worthy of the name of rest. If the Canaanites were still among them, disputing the possession of the country; if savage Adonibezeks were

still at large, whose victims bore in their mutilated bodies the marks of their cruelty and barbarity; if the power of the Philistines in the south, the Sidonians in the north, and the Geshurites in the north-east was still unbroken, how could they be said to have obtained rest?

The objection proceeds from inability to estimate the force of the comparative degree. Joshua gave them rest in the sense that he gave them homes of their own. There was no more need for the wandering life which they had led in the wilderness. They had more compact and comfortable habitations than the tents of the desert with their slim coverings that could effectually shut out neither the cold of winter, nor the heat of summer, nor the drenching rains. They had brighter objects to look out on than the scanty and monotonous vegetation of the wilderness. No doubt they had to defend their new homes, and in order to do so they had to expel the Canaanites who were still hovering about them. But still they were real homes; they were not homes which they merely expected or hoped to get, but homes which they had actually gotten. They were homes with the manifold attractions of country life—the field, the well, the garden, the orchard, stocked with vine, fig, and pomegranate; the olive grove, the rocky crag, and the quiet glen. The sheep and the oxen might be seen browsing in picturesque groups on the pasture grounds, as if they were part of the family. It was an interest to watch the progress of vegetation, to mark how the vine budded, and the lily sprang into beauty, to pluck the first rose, or to divide the first ripe pomegranate. Life had a new interest when on a bright spring morning the young man could thus invite his bride:—

"Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away.
For, lo, the winter is past,
The rain is over and gone;
The flowers appear on the earth;
The time of the singing of birds is come,
And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;
The fig tree putteth forth her green figs,
And the vines with the tender grape give a good smell.'

This, as it were, was Joshua's gift to Israel, or rather God's gift through Joshua. It was well fitted to kindle their gratitude, and though not yet complete or perfectly secure, it was entitled to be called "rest." For if there was still need of fighting to complete the conquest, it was fighting under easy conditions. If they went out under the influence of that faith of which Joshua had set them so memorable an example, they were sure of protection and of victory. Past experience had shown to demonstration that none of their enemies could stand before them, and the future would be as the past had been. God was still among them; if they called on Him, He would arise, their enemies would be scattered, and they that hated Him would flee before Him. Fidelity to Him would secure all the blessings that had been read out at Mount Gerizim, and to which they had enthusiastically shouted, Amen. The picture drawn by Moses before his death would be realized in its brightest colours: "Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed when thou goest out."

But here a very serious objection may be interposed. Is it conceivable, it may be asked, that this serene

satisfaction was enjoyed by the Israelites when they had got their new homes only by dispossessing the former owners; when all around them was stained by the blood of the slain, and the shrieks and groans of their predecessors were yet sounding in their ears? If these homes were not haunted by the ghosts of their former owners, must not the hearts and consciences of the new occupants have been haunted by recollections of the scenes of horror which had been enacted there? is it possible that they should have been in that tranquil and happy frame in which they would really enjoy the sweetness of their new abodes?

The question is certainly a disturbing one, and any answer that may be given to it must seem imperfect, just because we are incapable of placing ourselves wholly in the circumstances of the children of Israel.

We are incapable of entering into the callousness of the Oriental heart in reference to the sufferings or the death of enemies. Exceptions there no doubt were; but, as a rule, indifference to the condition of enemies, whether in life or in death, was the prevalent feeling.

Two parts of their nature were liable to be affected by the change which put the Israelites in possession of the houses and fields of the destroyed Canaanites—their consciences and their hearts.

With regard to their consciences the case was clear: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." God, as owner of the land of Canaan, had given it, some six hundred years before, to Abraham and his seed. That gift had been ratified by many solemnities, and belief in it had been kept alive in the hearts of Abraham's descendants from generation to generation. There had been no secret about it, and the Canaanites must have been

familiar with the tradition. Consequently, during all these centuries, they had been but tenants at will. When, under the guidance of Jehovah, Israel crossed the Red Sea and the army of Pharaoh was drowned, a pang must have shot through the breasts of the Canaanites, and the news must have come to them as a notice to quit. The echoes of the Song of Moses reverberated through the whole region :—

"The peoples have heard, they tremble:
Pangs have taken hold of the inhabitants of Philistia.
Then were the dukes of Edom amazed;
The mighty men of Moab, trembling taketh hold of them:
All the inhabitants of Canaan are melted away.
Terror and dread falleth upon them;
By the greatness of Thine arm they are as still as a stone;
Till Thy people pass over, O Lord,
Till the people pass over which Thou hast purchased.
Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance
The place, O Lord, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in,
The sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established.
The Lord shall reign for ever and ever."

It was well known, therefore, that, so far as Divine right went, the children of Israel were entitled to the land. But even after that, the Canaanites had a respite and enjoyed possession for forty years. Besides, they had been judicially condemned on account of their sins; and, moreover, when they first came into the country, they had dispossessed the former inhabitants. At last, after long delay, the hour of destiny arrived. When the Israelites took possession they felt that they were only regaining their own. It was not they, but the Canaanites, that were the intruders, and any feeling on the question of right in the minds of the Israelites would rather be that of indignation at having been kept out so long of what had been promised to Abraham, than of

squeamishness at dispossessing the Canaanites of property which was not their own.

Still, one might suppose there remained scope for natural pity. But this was not very active. We may gather something of the prevalent feeling from the song of Deborah and the action of Jael. It was not an age of humanity. The whole period of the Judges was indeed an "iron age." Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, were men of the roughest fibre. Even David's treatment of his Ammonite prisoners was revolting. All that can be said for Israel is, that their treatment of enemies did not reach that infamous pre-eminence of cruelty for which the Assyrians and the Babylonians were notorious. But they had enough of the prevailing callousness to enable them to enter without much discomfort on the homes and possessions of their dispossessed foes. They had no such sentimental reserve as to interfere with a lively gratitude to Joshua as the man who had given them rest.

Probably, in looking back on those times, we fail to realize the marvellous influence in the direction of all that is humane and loving that came into our world, and began to operate in full force, with the advent of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We forget how much darker a world it *must* have been before the true light entered, that lighteth every man coming into the world. We forget what a gift God gave to the world when Jesus entered it, bringing with Him the light and love, the joy and peace, the hope and the holiness of heaven. We forget that the coming of Jesus was the rising of the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings. Coming among us as the incarnation of Divine love, it was natural that He should correct the prevailing practice in the treatment of enemies, and infuse a new

spirit of humanity. Even the Apostle who afterwards became the Apostle of Love could manifest all the bitterness of the old spirit when he suggested the calling down of fire from heaven to burn up the Samaritan village that would not receive them. "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of, for the Son of man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Who does not feel the humane spirit of Christianity to be one of its brightest gems, and one of its chief contrasts with the imperfect economy that preceded it? It is when we mark the inveteracy of the old spirit of hatred that we see how great a change Christ has introduced. If it was the great distinction of Christ's love that "while we were yet enemies, Christ died for us," His precept to us to love our enemies ought to meet with our readiest obedience. Not without profound prophetic insight did the angel who announced the birth of Jesus proclaim, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will to men."

Alas! it is with much humiliation we must own that in practising this humane spirit of her Lord the progress of the Church has been slow and small. It seemed to be implied in the prophecies that Christianity would end war; yet one of the most outstanding phenomena of the world is, the so-called Christian nations of Europe armed to the teeth, expending millions of treasure year by year on destructive armaments, and withdrawing millions of soldiers from those pursuits which increase wealth and comfort, to be supported by taxes wrung from the sinews of the industrious, and to be ready, when called on, to scatter destruction and death among the ranks of their enemies. Surely it is a shame to the diplomacy of Europe that so little is done to arrest this

crying evil; that nation after nation goes on increasing its armaments, and that the only credit a good statesman can gain is that of retarding a collision, which, when it does occur, will be the widest in its dimensions, and the vastest and most hideous in the destruction it deals, that the world has ever seen! All honour to the few earnest men who have tried to make arbitration a substitute for war.

And surely it is no credit to the Christian Church that, when its members are divided in opinion, there should be so much bitterness in the spirit of its controversies. Grant that what excites men so keenly is the fear that the truth of God being at stake, that which they deem most sacred in itself, and most vital in its influence for good is liable to suffer; hence they regard it a duty to rebuke sharply all who are apparently prepared to betray it or compromise it. Is it not apparent that if love is not mingled with the controversies of Christians, it is vain to expect violence and war to cease among the nations? More than this, if love is not more apparent among Christians than has been common, we may well tremble for the cause itself. One of the leaders of German unbelief is said to have remarked that he did not think Christianity could be Divine, because he did not find the people called Christians paying more heed than others to the command of Jesus to love their enemies.

5. One other service of Joshua to the nation of Israel remains to be noticed: he sought with all his heart that they should be a God-governed people, a people that in every department of life should be ruled by the endeavour to do God's will. He pressed this on them with such earnestness, he commended it by his own example with such sincerity, he brought his whole

authority and influence to bear on it with such momentum, that to a large extent he succeeded, though the impression hardly survived himself. "The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the Lord that He had wrought for Israel." Joshua seemed always to be contending with an idolatrous virus which poisoned the blood of the people, and could not be eradicated. The only thing that seemed capable of crushing it was the outstretched arm of Jehovah, showing itself in some terrible form. While the effect of that display lasted the tendency to idolatry was subdued, but not extirpated; and as soon as the impression of it was spent, the evil broke out anew. It was hard to instil into them ruling principles of conduct that would guide them in spite of outward influences. As a rule, they were not like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or like Moses who "endured as seeing Him who is invisible." Individuals there were among them, like Caleb and Joshua himself, who walked by faith; but the great mass of the nation were carnal, and they exemplified the drift or tendency of that spirit—"The carnal mind is enmity against God."

Still Joshua laboured to press the lesson—the great lesson of the theocracy—Let God rule you; follow invariably His will. It is a rule for nations, for churches, for individuals. The Hebrew theocracy has passed away; but there is a sense in which every Christian nation should be a modified theocracy. So far as God has given abiding rules for the conduct of nations, every nation ought to regard them. If it be a Divine principle that righteousness exalteth a nation; if it be a Divine command to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy; if it be a Divine instruction to rulers to deliver

the needy when he crieth, the poor also and him that hath no helper, in these and in all such matters nations ought to be divinely ruled. It is blasphemous to set up rules of expediency above these eternal emanations of the Divine will.

So, too, churches should be divinely ruled. There is but one Lord in the Christian Church, He that is King of kings, and Lord of lords. There may be many details in Church life which are left to the discretion of its rulers, acting in accordance with the spirit of Scripture; but no church should accept of any ruler whose will may set aside the will of her Lord, nor allow any human authority to supersede what He has ordained.

And for individuals the universal rule is: "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by Him." Each true Christian heart is a theocracy—a Christ-governed soul. Not ruled by external appliances nor by mechanical rules, nor by the mere effort to follow a prescribed example; but by the indwelling of Christ's Spirit, by a vital force communicated from Himself. The spring of the Christian life is here—"Not I, but Christ liveth in me." This is the source of all the beautiful and fruitful Christian lives that ever have been, of all that are, and of all that ever shall be.

THE END.

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